

# Shingles FAQ



## ① What is shingles?

Shingles (*herpes zoster*) is caused by the varicella zoster virus—the same virus that causes chickenpox. The virus stays inactive in the body for life and can reactivate years, or even decades later, causing shingles. Shingles is a viral infection that causes a painful rash that can be severe, can cause nerve pain, and may involve the eyes, leading to vision loss.

## ② Am I at risk for shingles?

If you've had chickenpox, you are at risk for shingles. In the US, shingles strikes nearly one million people each year, and roughly half of them are age 60 years and older. One in three adults will get shingles in their lifetime. Shingles is typically associated with aging as well as anything that weakens the immune system such as certain medications, cancers, or infections, but it can also occur in healthy children and younger adults. Shingles is not passed from person to person.

## ③ How can I help protect myself against shingles?

There is a safe, effective vaccine available to help prevent shingles. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the vaccine for all adults 60 years of age and older who do not have a major immune-compromising condition.



About **1 in 3** adults in the US will get shingles in their lifetime.

## ④ At what age can I get the shingles vaccine?

Although the vaccine is licensed in the US for adults age 50 years and older, CDC recommends the shingles vaccine for adults age 60 years and older.

## ⑤ How much does the shingles vaccine cost?

If you are 60-64 years of age, your medical insurance may cover the shingles vaccine. Check with your insurance company to be sure. For adults age 65 years and older who have Medicare, the vaccine is covered for those who have elected to receive Medicare Part D. Generally, Medicare prescription drug plans (Part D) cover all commercially-available vaccines recommended to prevent illness (including the shingles vaccine). Contact your Medicare drug plan representative to ask about coverage.

## ⑥ What if I've already had shingles?

Even if you have had shingles, you can still get the shingles vaccine to help prevent future occurrences of the disease.

## ⑦ Is the vaccine guaranteed to prevent shingles?

No vaccine is 100% effective, but vaccination can help reduce risk significantly. Some who get the shingles vaccine may still get shingles, but the vaccine can roughly cut your chances of getting shingles in half, and it can help make future occurrences less severe.

## ⑧ How can I learn more about shingles and whether or not I need the vaccine?

Take the shingles quiz at [www.nfid.org/shingles](http://www.nfid.org/shingles) to see if you are at risk and ask your healthcare professional if vaccination is recommended for you.

### About NFID

Founded in 1973, the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to educating the public and healthcare professionals about the causes, prevention, and treatment of infectious diseases across the lifespan.

Learn more about preventing shingles at [nfid.org/shingles](http://nfid.org/shingles)