



# Briefing Pack

August 2023

## Changes to Shingles vaccination in Wales

Vaccination for Shingles is changing in Wales – and across the UK, so that more people are eligible for the vaccine.

Between September 2023 and September 2033 the shingles vaccine will be offered in a phased approach to everyone in Wales aged 60 years old until their 80 birthday. From September 2023 those who are severely immunosuppressed (have a very weakened immune system because of a health condition or medical treatment) will be eligible and invited for the vaccine from the age of 50, with no upper age limit.

This change is based on the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). Delivery will be implemented by GP surgeries in the recommended phased approach and patients will be contacted by their GP when they become eligible.

So from September, those who reach age 65 or 70 years should be called in on/after their 65th or 70th birthday.

Dr Chris Johnson, Head of the vaccine preventable disease programme, Public Health Wales said:

“Shingles is caused by the varicella zoster virus, the same virus which causes chicken pox. Shingles is caused by a reactivation of an infection of a nerve and the skin around it which can be very painful.

Most people fully recover from shingles, but for some the pain can last for months or even years after. This is called post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN), which is difficult to treat and can be extremely painful.

The older you are, the more likely you are to have PHN as a side effect of a shingles infection and this is an additional reason why the vaccine is offered to older adults.

Since 2013 eligible people in Wales have been offered the shingles vaccine as part of the routine programme to all those aged between 70 and 79 and we welcome the news that this is going to be increasingly expanded to lower age groups.”

## **FAQs**

### **Who should have the vaccine?**

The Joint Committee of Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) have advised that the shingles vaccine programme is extended to people aged 60 and over and carried out in phases.

They have also advised that the vaccine is offered to people aged 50 and over who have very weakened immune systems.

**This table shows who is eligible for a shingles vaccine from 1 September 2023.**

<b>Your age</b>	<b>Do you have a very weakened immune system?</b>	<b>When will I have the shingles vaccine?</b>
<b>50 and over</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>On or after your 50<sup>th</sup> birthday</b>
<b>65 or 70</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>On or after your 65<sup>th</sup> or 70<sup>th</sup> birthday</b>
<b>70 (before 1 September 2023) to 79 (if you have not had a shingles vaccine)</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>You are eligible. Book an appointment with your GP surgery.</b>

<b>66 to 69</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>If you turned 65 before 1 September 2023 you will be contacted when you turn 70.</b> <b>If you turned 65 after 1 September 2023 you are still eligible. Contact your GP surgery for an appointment.</b>
<b>60 to 64</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>You will be contacted when you turn 65.</b>

### **What about people who are outside these age groups?**

Younger people will be offered the vaccine when they reach the eligible age.

Shingles can occur at any age, but the risk, severity and complications increase with age. Those with severely weakened immune systems are at higher risk, which is why the vaccine is recommended at an earlier age.

If you are worried about shingles speak to your GP.

### **Do I need the vaccine if I've had shingles before?**

Yes. Even if you've already had shingles, you should still get the vaccine as it will reduce your risk of getting shingles again.

### **What do people need to do to get their vaccine? How will they be communicated with?**

Once someone becomes eligible their GP surgery will contact them directly to arrange their vaccination appointment.

### **Why is this not being rolled out to all 60 – 70 year olds at the same time?**

In Wales we are following the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).

The implementation of a large vaccination programme, such as this, is dependent on supply of vaccine and supplier capacity. Therefore the Committee has stated that the changes to the shingles programme for individuals with a normal immune response, who are eligible, should be implemented in stages, starting initially at 65 years and 70 years.

This method was seen as the simplest approach to adopt by the Committee in order to manage supply effectively.

Shingles vaccination is offered on a year-round (not seasonal) basis and in the first phase, people will receive an invitation, shortly after they turn 65 or 70.

This process should continue until vaccine has been offered to all those aged 65 to 70 years of age over a 5 year period. Once this group has been offered vaccination, the routine age for vaccination should then move to 60 years of age, with vaccination continuing at 65 years of age, until vaccine has been offered to all those aged 60 to 65 years of age over a 5 year period. From September 2033 vaccination should be routinely offered at age 60.

From September 2023 individuals aged 50 years and over who are severely immunosuppressed (have a very weakened immune system because of a health condition or medical treatment) will be eligible for a vaccine.

### **How and when is the vaccination given?**

Most people will have the vaccination at their GP surgery. It is an injection given in the upper arm.

If you have the weakened live virus vaccine (Zostavax) you will only need one dose.

If you have the inactivated vaccine (Shingrix) you will need two doses.

- If you have a severely weakened immune system, you should have the second dose at least eight weeks after your first dose.
- If you do not have a severely weakened immune system, you should have the second dose at least six to 12 months after your first dose.

Once your course is complete you do not need any more shingles vaccines.

### **Can I choose which shingles vaccine to have?**

No, your GP or practice nurse will offer you the vaccine that is recommended for you. You become eligible for the shingles vaccine on the NHS programme depending on your age and your current medical history.

### **Is Shingrix as safe as Zostavax?**

Like all vaccines, the safety and effectiveness of Shingrix has been thoroughly tested in clinical trials.

A vaccine is only released to the public if scientific tests, called clinical trials, show the benefits outweigh the risks.

### **What is the difference between Shingrix and Zostavax?**

- Zostavax, is a live vaccine given as 1 dose
- Shingrix, a non-live vaccine given as 2 doses

### **Are there any side effects?**

Side effects from the vaccine are usually quite mild and don't last long.

The most common side effects are:

- pain and tenderness in the arm where the injection was given;
- headache; and
- general aches.

After the Shingrix vaccine you may feel tired and have a fever. You can rest and take the normal dose of paracetamol (follow the advice in the packaging) to help make you feel better. Do not use machines or drive if you are feeling unwell.

If the side effects last for more than a few days, you should speak to a healthcare professional.

If you have had the weakened live virus vaccine (Zostavax), a rash of small blisters may develop where the injection was given (but this is rare). If this happens, cover the rash until it crusts over and avoid contact with newborn babies and anyone with a weakened immune system or who is pregnant, especially if they have never had chickenpox. Please get advice from your GP surgery.

Other side effects are uncommon or very rare.

### **What do I need to do?**

Your GP practice should get in touch with you to make an appointment when you are eligible.

If they don't, or you think you might have missed the invitation, contact them and tell them you think you are due for a shingles vaccine.

For most eligible people the shingles vaccine will be offered until they are 80. However, if you have a severely weakened immune system, the vaccine can be given from age 50 up to any age.

For the best protection, you should have the vaccine or complete the course at the recommended time.

You can have the shingles vaccine at any time of the year.

**Where can I get more information?**

If you have any questions or want more information, visit [111.wales.nhs.uk](http://111.wales.nhs.uk), talk to your doctor or nurse or call NHS 111 Wales.

You can find more information on vaccines offered in Wales at [phw.nhs.wales/vaccines](http://phw.nhs.wales/vaccines)

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