

## **Script – Print – Making the Shingles Vaccine a Priority**

### **Vaccine encouraged for people 50 and older**

Often we've heard people say, "I meant to get the shingles vaccine, but I just didn't get around to it."

About one out of every three people in the United States will develop shingles in their lifetime. Most medical providers agree that taking time for the shingles vaccine should be high on your checklist.

"Shingles is a rash that you develop when a latent virus from chickenpox essentially decides that it's going to make itself known again after being dormant in our body for decades," says BreAnne Gendron, an advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) for OSF HealthCare. "And it is usually very painful and it's contagious to people who have never had chickenpox, or been vaccinated for it."

Shingles tends to pop up on one side of the face or body and in one small area. Typical symptoms include chills, fever, headache, sensitive skin and an extremely painful rash. If the rash appears on your face, there is additional risk of it impacting your eye and causing serious vision problems.

According to Gendron, everyone who has had chickenpox is at risk of getting shingles. But those who are at greater risk are older people and people who have trouble fighting infections.

"If our immune system is suppressed, or we're stressed out, or we're sick with something else, that virus can become active again and it presents as pain and some kind of strange sensation in the place where the rash is going to develop," says Gendron.

Most cases of shingles last between three to five weeks. It starts with burning or tingling pain, followed by a rash. A few days later, the rash turns into blisters before drying up and crusting over about 10 days later. Treatment for shingles includes antiviral medicines and pain medicine. Wet compresses, calamine lotion and oatmeal baths can help relieve itching.

"It is self-limiting and will go away on its own, but it is good to come and seek treatment in the first two or three days of your rash so that we can give you an antiviral because it reduces your risk of post herpetic neuralgia (PHN), which is even after your rash is gone," says Gendron. "The pain sticks around so we want to reduce the risk of that by giving you some treatment."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that adults 50 and older get two doses of the shingles vaccine, called Shingrix, between two and six months apart. Potential side effects include arm soreness, fever and headache for a couple of days.

For people between the ages of 50 and 69, the vaccine is about 97 % effective; protection stays above 85% for at least the first four years following vaccination.

Most insurance plans will cover the shingles vaccine, but the coverage varies. Out-of-pocket costs vary by plan and deductible but may be covered as a preventive care benefit. Check with your provider or insurance plan for more details.

For people who are on the fence about getting the vaccine, Gendron offers some advice.

“Shingles is preventable with vaccine,” she says. “It’s painful and contagious to people who haven’t had chickenpox or been vaccinated. And it’s an easy thing to get done. Get the vaccine so that you don’t have to have a painful couple of weeks and have to keep yourself away from your loved ones who may have suppressed immune systems.”

Gendron recommends talking to your doctor about shingles and the importance of vaccination. For more information on shingles, visit [OSF HealthCare](#).