

Protect yourself



from the pain of shingles

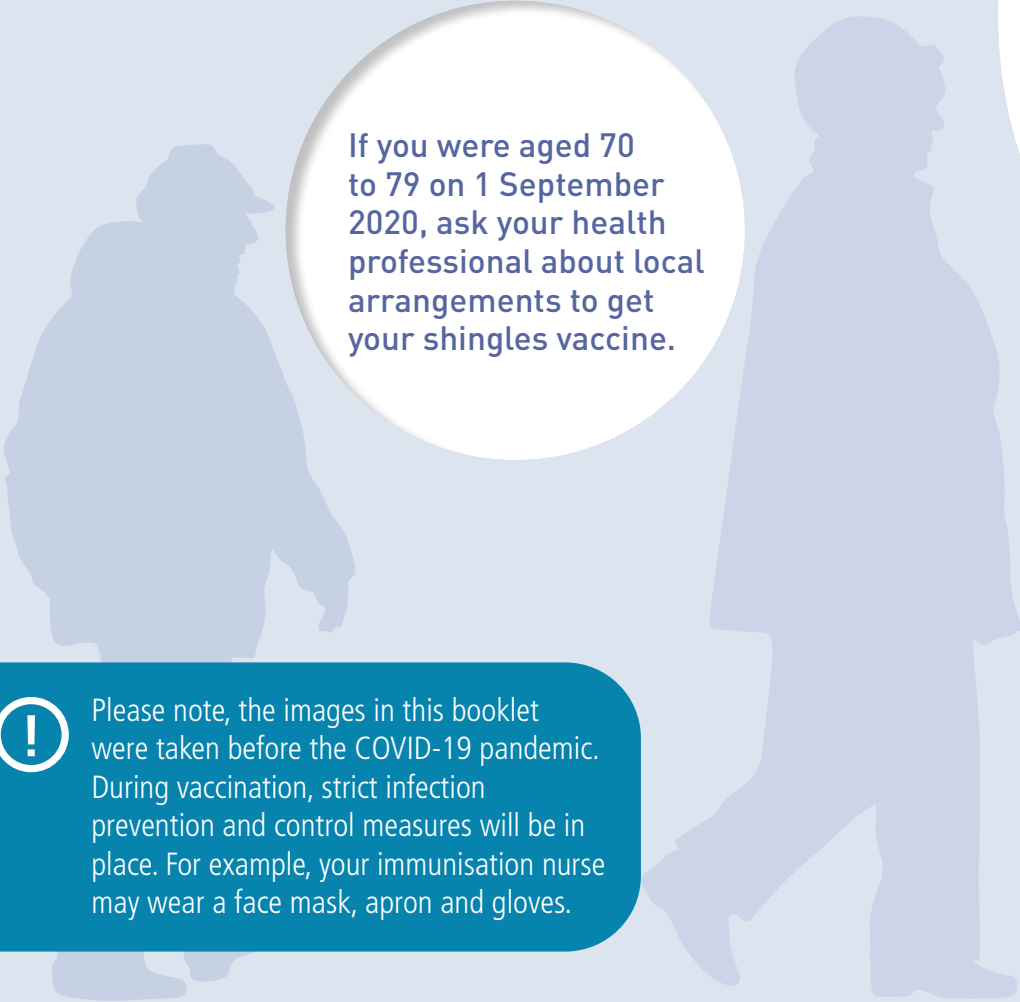
For people aged
70 to 79 on
1 September 2020



Shingles can be very painful and is more common among older people.

The shingles vaccine can reduce your risk of getting shingles or, if you do get shingles, it can make the symptoms milder.

This leaflet describes shingles and the benefits of the vaccine.



If you were aged 70 to 79 on 1 September 2020, ask your health professional about local arrangements to get your shingles vaccine.



Please note, the images in this booklet were taken before the COVID-19 pandemic. During vaccination, strict infection prevention and control measures will be in place. For example, your immunisation nurse may wear a face mask, apron and gloves.



the benefits of **getting the vaccine**

Helps you
stay healthy
as you get
older.

Helps protect
you from
getting
shingles.

Reduces your risk
of experiencing
long-term pain
from shingles if
you get it.

For more information or advice, speak to your health professional or visit www.nhsinform.scot/shingles

What causes shingles?

Shingles is caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox. Most adults in Scotland have had chickenpox. When you recover from chickenpox your body destroys most of the virus, but some stays in your body's nervous system. The virus can then affect you again later in life. This can happen when your immune system has been weakened by age, stress, illness or certain treatments that can reduce your immunity.

The World Health Organization states that the two things that have had the biggest impact on the world's health are clean water and vaccines.



The shingles vaccine helps to protect you by boosting your immunity.



How common is shingles?

Most adults in Scotland have had the chickenpox virus. One in four go on to develop shingles, and it's much more common in older adults.

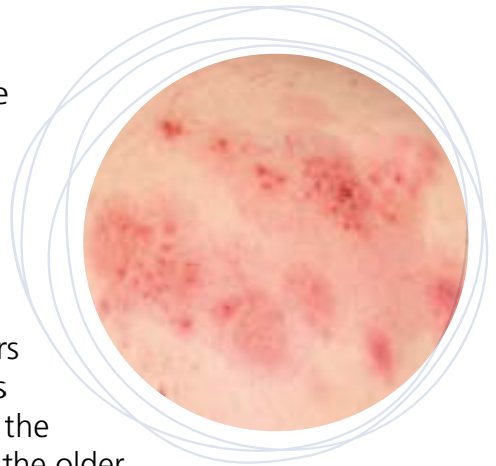
What are the symptoms of shingles?

When the chickenpox virus causes shingles, it usually infects a specific nerve and the area of skin around it. The infection causes a rash with very painful blisters and often long-term pain.

These blisters usually appear on a specific part of one side of the body, usually on the chest, but sometimes they also affect the head, face and eyes. This can cause severe pain and even blindness.

The shingles rash usually appears a few days after the pain begins and lasts for about a week, but the pain can last much longer. And the older you are, the more likely you are to have long-lasting pain. In some cases, the pain persists for several months or even years – this is called post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN). One in five people go on to develop longer-lasting pain.

This pain can be very difficult to treat, but the shingles vaccine reduces the risk of getting shingles and the long-term painful side effects.



How do you get shingles?

It's caused when the chickenpox virus (caught when you were younger) affects your nerves later in your life. We do not know exactly why, but older people might be at higher risk of developing shingles because their immunity (protection against infection and disease) is lower. Immunity is also lower in those who are stressed, have a condition that affects the immune system, such as cancer, or who are taking some medications, for example long-term steroids.

You cannot get shingles from someone who has chickenpox or shingles. But if you have shingles blisters, someone who has not had chickenpox (usually a child) can get chickenpox from you.

Anyone who thinks they may have shingles should contact their GP practice for an urgent appointment. Early treatment reduces the risk of long-term pain.

Who can get the shingles vaccine?

People aged 70 to 79 on 1 September 2020 can get the shingles vaccine. If you are within this age group, ask your health professional about local arrangements to get your shingles vaccine. People who have weakened immune systems, for example due to cancer treatment, should not have the vaccine. See page 6 for more information.

How does the vaccine work?

The shingles vaccine contains a weakened form of the virus that causes shingles. Because it's weakened it does not cause the illness. It helps to build up your immunity to the virus, so your body will fight it off more easily if it affects you again. This can reduce your risk of developing shingles or, if you do get shingles, it can make the symptoms milder.

The vaccine will reduce your risk of developing shingles. If you do go on to have shingles, the symptoms will be milder and will not last as long as they would have if you had not had the vaccine.



How is the vaccine given?

Like most vaccines, it will be given as an injection in your upper arm. During vaccination, strict infection prevention and control measures will be in place.



You will only need to get the shingles vaccine once. You can get it at any time of the year.

Is there anyone who should not get the vaccine?

There are some people who cannot get the shingles vaccine. For example if you:

- have a severely weakened immune system (for example, due to certain cancer treatments; blood disorders such as leukaemia or lymphoma; taking steroid tablets; or you've had a transplant) – if you think this may apply, discuss this with your hospital specialist or GP
- have had a severe reaction to any of the ingredients in the vaccine or to a previous dose of the chickenpox vaccine.

Most medications can be taken at the time you get the shingles vaccine. Your GP will tell you whether any of this applies to you and can answer any questions you have about this.

The shingles vaccine contains a very small amount of pork gelatine. Gelatine is a common and essential ingredient in many medicines, including some vaccines with gelatine. It's your choice whether or not you get the shingles vaccine. At the moment there is no shingles vaccine that does not contain pork gelatine.



Some people cannot have the shingles vaccine. Your GP or practice nurse will check that you can have the vaccine.

Will there be any side effects?

Side effects from having the vaccine are usually quite mild and do not last very long. The most common side effects, which affect at least one in 10 people, include headaches as well as redness or tenderness where the injection was given.

If you have side effects that last for more than a few days, speak to your GP or practice nurse.

You can report suspected side effects of vaccines and medicines by visiting <https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk> or by calling the Yellow Card hotline on **0800 731 6789** (9 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday).

Visit www.nhsinform.scot/shingles for a link to the vaccine patient information leaflet.

How safe is the vaccine?

The shingles vaccine is safe. All medicines, including vaccines, are tested for safety and effectiveness before they're allowed to be used. Their safety continues to be checked while in use.



For more information, or to get any advice about the shingles vaccine, talk to your health professional or visit www.nhsinform.scot/shingles

I've had shingles before, should I still get the vaccine?

Yes. Even if you've already had shingles, you could still get it again. The vaccine will reduce your risk of getting shingles again. Or, if you do get shingles, it can reduce how serious the symptoms will be. Let your GP or practice nurse know that you've had shingles before.

When will I get the vaccine?

You can get the vaccine at any time of year if you were aged 70 to 79 on 1 September 2020. The next time you're speaking to your health professional ask them about the shingles vaccine. Or maybe you could get it when you are getting your annual flu vaccine.

Unlike the flu vaccine, which you need to get every year, you only need to get the shingles vaccine once.

How the NHS handles your information

You have rights in relation to the access and the use of your personal health information. For more information about your rights or how the NHS uses your personal information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) visit

www.nhsinform.scot/confidentiality and
www.nhsinform.scot/data-protection



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www.nhsinform.scot/shingles



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