

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is shingles?**

Shingles is an infection caused by the same virus as chickenpox, which most of us have had. Most of the virus is destroyed when you recover from chickenpox but some of the virus survives and remains dormant in your body's nervous system. This can become active later in life causing shingles.

Shingles symptoms include a tingling feeling on your skin, feeling generally unwell and a developing a painful rash, that usually forms on one side of your body, and lasts up to 4 weeks. In rare cases it can lead to serious problems such as hearing loss or blindness. Shingles is more common among older people, but younger people can also be affected.

### **Why should I have the shingles vaccine?**

Shingles can be very painful and this can become worse as you get older. For some, the pain can last for many months or even years. In Scotland 1 in 4 people contract shingles each year and around 400 people over the age of 70, will be admitted into hospital.

### **About the vaccine.**

You will be offered 2 doses of the Shingrix vaccine, a non-live vaccine. These are given approximately 6 months apart. If you have a severely weakened immune system, they you will likely have the 2 doses closer together.

### **I've missed my second vaccination and my first appointment was more than 6 months ago. What should I do?**

Contact the vaccination hub on 01896 809250, who will be able to advise.

### **Vaccine safety.**

All medicines, including vaccines, are tested for safety and effectiveness before they are allowed to be used and are monitored by the Medicines and Health care products Regulatory Agency.

### **How is the vaccine given?**

Vaccinations are given as an injection in the upper arm.

Most people do not experience any, or only mild side effects after having the vaccine. Side effects mean the vaccine is teaching your body's immune system how to protect itself from the disease. The most common side effects might include a sore arm, slight fever, chills, or fatigue and are usually managed by taking paracetamol. A member of staff will discuss this with you at your appointment.

Contact your GP practice if you have side effects that last for more than a few days.

### **I have a fear of needles, is there another option?**

If you have a fear of needles, please let the person (vaccinator) giving you your vaccine know. Feeling nervous can be a natural response for some people. Your

vaccinator understands this and will help you. The needles used are small and you should only feel a tiny scratch.

### **Do I need the shingles vaccine if I have had shingles?**

Yes, you can get shingles more than once. Having the vaccine helps reduce your risk of getting shingles again.

### **I have never had chickenpox or shingles; do I need the vaccine?**

Yes. You probably have had the chickenpox virus at some point but without knowing. Some people have chickenpox without any of the typical chickenpox symptoms.

### **Am I eligible for the shingles vaccine?**

If you are in any of the following groups, you are eligible for the shingles vaccination.

- People aged 50 years or over and about to start immunosuppressive therapy.
- People aged 50 years or over with a severely weakened immune system.
- People aged 70 years from 1 September 2023.
- People aged 71-79 years (were born between 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1944 and 1<sup>st</sup> September 1953) and have not previously been vaccinated.
- People aged 65 on or before 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023. If you were aged 66-69 on this date you will not yet be eligible.
- People aged 18 and over who have had specific cancer treatments. Please call the vaccination hub on 01896 809250 for further advise.

Everyone eligible for shingles vaccination should have received a letter asking you to contact NHS Borders vaccination team to arrange an appointment.

[Shingles vaccine eligibility by age calculator 2023/24 \(scot.nhs.uk\)](https://www.scot.nhs.uk/shingles/vaccine-eligibility-calculator)

### **Why am I not eligible for the vaccine?**

The shingles programme is changing – this is so more people can be protected from a younger age. Achieving this will take time but changes will start this year beginning with the 65 year age group. By 2033 the shingles vaccine will be offered to everyone aged 60 and over.

The phased roll-out is based on the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) [Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/joint-committee-on-vaccination-and-immunisation) These decisions are based on a number of factors, like the risk of the disease and the effectiveness of the vaccine in different age groups.

### **I am unwell on the day of my appointment, should I still get my vaccination?**

If you feel too unwell to do normal activities, or have a high temperature, wait until you're feeling better.

### **I can't attend my appointment?**

It is important that you attend your vaccination appointment, but we understand this isn't always possible. You can change your appointment by calling the vaccination

hub on 01896 809250. Cancelling or changing your appointment in advance means that we can offer your appointment to someone else.

### **Can I still catch shingles after having the vaccine?**

It is possible to catch Shingles after having the vaccine but it is likely to be milder and not last as long. The vaccination can take up to 10 days for your body to build up extra protection from the booster dose.

### **Is there anything I should bring to my appointment?**

If you are taking medication, it's important that you bring a list of your medicines to discuss with the person giving you your vaccination.

### **Can I bring a friend, family member or carer to my appointment?**

Yes, you can ask someone to come with you to your appointment. Where possible we would suggest limiting this to one person however, we do accommodate for families with children.

### **I need an interpreter at my appointment, what should I do?**

If you need a BSL interpreter or a deaf-blind guide at your vaccination appointment, please call 01896 809250 or email [Vaccination.BookingHub@borders.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:Vaccination.BookingHub@borders.scot.nhs.uk) as soon as possible.

Telephone interpreting for other languages is available at our clinics (via Big Word / language line), just let one of our admin staff know when you arrive at the clinic.

### **I have no transport to get to my appointment?**

If you need transport call Scottish Borders Council on 0300 100 1800. We would suggest that you contact Scottish Borders Council as soon as possible as it might take a little for the Council to make arrangements for you.

Further information is available from [NHS inform](#)