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Does Medicare Cover the Shingles Shot?

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Summary:

There are two types of shingles vaccines, Zostavax and Shingrix, that may help prevent shingles. Neither Original Medicare nor Medicare Advantage cover the shingles vaccine on their own, but you can generally get [Medicare coverage](#) for a shingles vaccine through Medicare Part D, which is optional prescription drug coverage through a private health insurance company.

What is Shingles?

Shingles is a viral infection that causes a painful rash, according to the Mayo Clinic. As we get older, the likelihood of getting Shingles increases and you can, in fact, get it more than once. In addition to this, there are some cases where children can get shingles as well.

Anyone who has ever had chicken pox can later come down with shingles. Your risk of shingles and complications from shingles increases as you get older, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). More than 99% of Americans 40 years old and older have had chickenpox, even if they don't remember it, reports the CDC.

The shingles shot may help prevent shingles but is not 100% effective. There is no other method of protection against shingles, but the shingles vaccine, according to the CDC.

Overall, shingles infections had been increasing among adults, up until 2008 when the CDC saw a lull of new infections.

How does Medicare cover the shingles vaccine?

Original Medicare, Part A and Part B, does not cover the shingles vaccination but Medicare Part D

Original Medicare, Part A and Part B, does not cover the shingles vaccination but Medicare Part D does. To get this covered, you must enroll in either a stand-alone Medicare prescription drug plan (PDP) or a Medicare Advantage plan that includes prescription drug coverage (also known as Medicare Advantage prescription drug plan). You may have a copayment for the shingles vaccine.

What are the two types of Shingles Vaccines?

The two options for the shingles shot are Zostavax and Shingrix. Zostavax, according to the Mayo Clinic, protects against shingles for about five years. It's a live vaccine given as a single shot in the upper arm. The Zostavax shingles shot is recommended to adults age 60 and over which reduces the risk of developing shingles by 51%, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Studies suggest that Shingrix offers protection against shingles for more than five years. It's a nonliving vaccine given in two doses.

Who Should get the Shingrix Vaccine?

The Shingrix shingles shot is recommended for adults age 50 and older.

The Shingrix shingles vaccine is more effective than Zostavax. Shingrix is more than 97% effective in preventing shingles in adults 50 to 69 years old after two doses. The Shingrix shingles vaccine is 91% effective in preventing shingles in adults age 70 and older, according to the CDC.

CDC recommends two doses of the vaccine (RZV, Shingrix) to prevent shingles and related complications in adults 50 years and older. For adults 19 years and older who have weakened immune systems, the vaccine is also recommended.

There is no age limit for receiving Shingrix, and it is recommended to get the shot if:

- You have previously had shingles
- You have received Zostavax
- You have received the chickenpox vaccine (Varicella)

Who Should not get the Shingrix Vaccine?

Those who should not receive Shingrix are:

- People with allergic reactions to any part of the vaccine
- People with allergic reaction after a dose of Shingrix.
- People who currently have shingles.
- Pregnant women should wait to get Shingrix.

If you have a cold or any other minor illness, you can get Shingrix, however if you have moderate or

severe symptoms, with or without fever, you should wait till recovering before getting the vaccine.

What are some of the Side Effects to the Shingles Vaccine?

The shingles vaccine has been shown through numerous studies to be safe. Some may experience fatigue in the days following the shot. With other post-shot symptoms including:

- Soreness around the shot site
- Sore arm
- Mild redness and swelling
- Muscle pains and a headache
- Chills
- Fever
- Stomach pain and/or nausea

Some people experienced these side effects and are unable to do regular activities for a few days, with symptoms in 2 to 3 days. These side effects were most common in younger people.

When to see a doctor

If you or a family or friend find that these side effect symptoms do not go away after a few days, you might try over-the-counter medicine such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen. Please contact your primary care provider if the symptoms are not improving or are getting worse.

Sever symptoms can include:

- Hives
- swelling of the face and throat
- difficulty breathing
- fast heartbeat
- dizziness, or weakness

Again, if you experience these or any other life-threatening symptoms, see a doctor immediately.

How does Medicare provide coverage for the Shingles Vaccine?

Medicare prescription drug plans and Medicare Advantage plans that provide prescription drug coverage generally cover all commercially available vaccinations. These plans will cover the vaccination medication and the administration of the shot by your doctor or physician. Depending on your plan benefits, you may have to pay a copayment or coinsurance amount. Make sure to follow your plan's guidelines for this vaccination to be covered.

You will pay the least amount of money out of pocket if you are vaccinated at a pharmacy in your

drug plan's network. A summary of ways you can pay for your shingles vaccine include:

Medicare

- Medicare Part D plans cover the shingles vaccine. There may be a copay, or you may need to pay the full amount and get reimbursed for some of the cost.
- Original Medicare Part B does not cover the shingles vaccine.

Medicaid

- To learn if your Medicaid coverage pays for the Shingles vaccine, please contact your Medicaid insurer.

Private health insurance

- Private health insurance plans cover the vaccine, but there may be some costs depending on your plan.

Vaccine assistance programs

- Some pharmaceutical companies provide vaccines to those who are eligible and unable to afford costs. Contact with the vaccine manufacturer, GlaxoSmithKline, about if Shingrix is covered by these programs.

If you have questions about which pharmacies are included in your plan's network, contact your Medicare prescription drug plan or Medicare Advantage prescription drug plan for more information. To find a Medicare Part D plan in your area, enter your zip code on this page.

Medicare information is everywhere. What is hard is knowing which information to trust. Because eHealth's Medicare related content is compliant with CMS regulations, you can rest assured you're getting accurate information so you can make the right decisions for your coverage. [Read more to learn about our Compliance Program.](#)

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