



**PATIENT INFORMATION:  
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SHINGLES VACCINES**

Shingles is an infection caused by the chickenpox virus that becomes reactivated, often years after someone first had a chickenpox infection. It can look like blisters or a spotted skin rash and can be very painful.

Shingles can happen to anyone, but is more common in immunosuppressed patients, such as those with a transplant.

If you think you may have shingles at any time you should contact your family doctor or transplant doctor as soon as possible.

There are currently two types of shingles vaccines that may reduce the chance of someone getting shingles. **There are important differences between these 2 vaccines that impact your safety as a patient before or after a transplant.** If you have had an episode of shingles, you should wait 1 year before getting any shingles vaccine.

**Zostavax™ (Merck)** is a vaccine against shingles that has been available for many years. This is a “live vaccine” and **SHOULD NOT BE GIVEN TO ANY PATIENT AFTER TRANSPLANT OR WITHIN 4 WEEKS BEFORE TRANSPLANT.**

- Zostavax™ can be given as a single dose to patients 50 years of age or older. It can be given to patients who are waiting for a transplant but it is recommended they are put on hold for 4 weeks after receiving the vaccine.
- **If you have had a transplant you should NOT receive this vaccine.**
- If you are waiting for a transplant, check with your transplant doctor as to whether you should receive this vaccine.

**Shingrix™ (Glaxo Smith Kline)** is a newer shingles vaccine. It is a “killed or non-live vaccine” and **CAN BE GIVEN TO PATIENTS 50 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER WHO ARE WAITING FOR TRANSPLANT OR AFTER TRANSPLANT.** It is given as two doses at least two months apart.

- Patients who are waiting for transplant DO NOT need to be on hold after receiving the vaccine. After transplant patients should wait at least 3 months to receive the vaccine, so that the vaccine will work better.

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- If you are waiting for a transplant, check with your transplant doctor as to whether you should receive this vaccine.
- In order to receive this vaccine you should be “immune to chickenpox” (also known as VZV or Varicella antibody positive). Your doctor can do a blood test to determine if you are immune to chickenpox.
- Shingrix™ may not be publicly funded in your province at this time. You may have to cover the cost out of pocket, which is around \$250 for the 2 doses. Pharmacies or family doctors’ offices may stock the vaccine.