

No. 075/26

9th March 2026

To: All Branches

Urgent Shingles Vaccine Reminder

Dear Colleagues,

Fewer than half of UK adults are taking up their free shingles vaccine in the first year of being eligible, according to latest [UK Health Security Agency \(UKHSA\) data](#).

A single-dose shingles vaccine was introduced by the NHS in 2013, and since September 2023 it has been replaced by a new 2-dose vaccine called Shingrix. It is currently offered to people who turned 65 on or after 1 September 2023, those aged 70 to 79 who haven't yet been vaccinated, and people aged 18 and over with a severely weakened immune system.

Evidence shows the shingles vaccine is over 70% effective at reducing the risk of developing shingles in people who receive two doses of the vaccine.

Understanding the Shingles Threat

The UKHSA have recently highlighted the significant risks associated with shingles. This condition is caused by the reactivation of the varicella-zoster virus, the same virus responsible for chickenpox. Once an individual recovers from chickenpox, the virus can lie dormant in the body for decades, only to re-emerge later in life as shingles when immunity declines, which can result in a potentially very severe four-week illness that is responsible for **approximately 50 fatalities** in the United Kingdom every single year.

[Shingles - NHS](#)

[Shingles vaccine resources - Publications - Public Health Scotland](#)

[Shingles vaccine | nidirect](#)

[Shingles vaccine - Public Health Wales](#)

Recognising the Symptoms

According to UKHSA guidance, the initial signs of shingles often include a tingling sensation or localised pain on one side of the face or body, sometimes accompanied by a headache or general malaise. A rash typically develops a few days later, progressing through several stages.

- The rash begins as red blotches, which then form itchy, fluid-filled blisters.
- These blisters eventually crust over and heal, a process that can take up to four weeks.
- The skin may remain painful for weeks after the visible rash has disappeared.
- It is crucial to note the rash usually appears on only one side of the body.

Recent health and safety meetings within our CWU regions have identified that there may indeed be lack of knowledge of the 2-dose Shingrix vaccine and therefore CWU branch awareness is encouraged wherever possible. A printable version of the UKHSA/NHS shingles guide is available via this link below.

[There's a vaccine to help protect you from the pain of shingles](#)

This LTB is shared on behalf of CWU Central Services.

If you have any questions or need any further information, please contact:

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