

Press Release

Shingles Awareness Week Campaign

26 February 2024, TORONTO, Canada – The International Federation on Ageing (IFA) is proud to announce the successful launch of the Shingles Awareness Week in Canada Campaign, which will be held from the 26th of February to the 6th of March 2024. Following the successful inaugural Shingles Awareness Week Campaign in 2023, the IFA is pleased to celebrate and continue to raise awareness about shingles as an important vaccine preventable disease and foster increased knowledge and action.

As individuals age, the waning of their immune system can prevent a robust immune-response to the dormant varicella zoster virus (better known as chickenpox), allowing for the reactivation of the virus in later years and resulting in the vaccine preventable disease known as shingles.¹⁻³ Older adults are at the greatest risk of shingles, with the highest burden in those aged 50 years and over and with negative health outcomes including bacterial skin infections, postherpetic neuralgia, hearing, and vision complications.^{1,4} Over 130,000 Canadians are affected by shingles each year, 13% of whom will report postherpetic neuralgia following their infection.⁵ The pain associated can have physical, psychological, functional and social consequences that lasts months or years following infection.⁶ Despite the life changing consequences that can arise and the fact that vaccination is one of the most effective preventative measures against shingles, awareness levels and vaccination uptake rates remain alarmingly low.

“I have had treatment in an ongoing way for 12 years and I have corneal damage and scarring”
(Patient with shingles).

The Shingles Awareness Week Campaign targets individuals at risk for shingles, patient and advocacy organizations, and policy makers to address gaps in vaccine uptake amongst those most at risk for shingles. The campaign features a variety of communications, including a podcast episode with Dr. Samir Sinha, Director of Geriatrics at Mount Sinai and the University Health Network Hospitals in Toronto and Director of Health Policy Research at the National Institute of Ageing, and a video of patient perspectives and reflections on shingles. Other elements included are an adaptable resource for civil society organizations, an X / Twitter fact sheet, and a comprehensive message bank designed and curated to equip Canadians with the information necessary to pursue healthy ageing and make informed decisions regarding preventative measures such as vaccination. By raising awareness of the risk that shingles poses the IFA aims for Shingles Awareness Week to act as a catalyst for increased individual and governmental action towards improving shingles vaccine uptake rates in Canada and beyond! To learn more about Shingles Awareness Week in Canada visit [Vaccines4Life](#) and explore the IFA's social media platforms.

References

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