

IFA Recognizes Shingles Awareness Week and Emphasizes the Importance of Vaccination for Older Adults

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This Shingles Awareness Week, there is a need to raise awareness of the potentially debilitating and painful effects of shingles and emphasize the importance of access to shingles vaccination, particularly for older adults.

Shingles is a viral infection caused by the same virus as chickenpox. Shingles can lead to severe pain, rash, and complications such as post-herpetic neuralgia—a long-lasting pain that can significantly impact quality of life. Approximately 1 in 3 people will develop shingles in their lifetime. Shingles is most common and severe in older adults, particularly those aged 50 and over, as immune systems naturally weaken with age. Studies show that individuals aged 60 and above are at the highest risk of developing severe cases of shingles, which can result in long-term health complications and hospitalization. Vaccination is essential in reducing both the risk and severity of shingles, and providing protection against recurring pain and potential complications.

As part of Shingles Awareness Week, the IFA spoke to Canadians on their experience in accessing the shingles vaccine. Dr. Olive Bryanton, a postdoctoral researcher in ageing studies shared, "For the people I know who have shingles, they are constantly facing a recurrence, and I think it's as bad as the original time they had it. It's painful and I try and tell people, do you want to go through that pain, or...even if [you're] skeptical, try and get vaccinated." The ongoing suffering many experience with shingles highlights the urgent need for broader vaccination access.

This Shingles Awareness Week, the IFA is calling on governments to ensure that vaccination is made available and accessible to groups at highest risk. Provinces and territories must strengthen public health messaging and vaccination programs to include the shingles vaccination.

Provinces such as Prince Edward Island (PEI), Ontario, Quebec and Yukon cover the cost of the shingles vaccine for older and at-risk adults, however there is need for more widespread integration of shingles vaccination into public health programs across the country to ensure that those at highest risk have access to this preventive measure.

As Barbara MacNevin, a retired teacher from PEI, shares "I can tell you that I am now 85 and have had both shingles vaccinations in the last few years. They had them at my local pharmacy and had no reaction to either of them. I paid for them personally (with a drugstore discount), but I believe the PEI Government now will pay for seniors' shots. I had had shingles several years ago and suffered with it. I was very happy to get the vaccinations for protection". Expanding access to the vaccine across Canada ensures that more people can protect themselves and live healthier, pain-free lives.

As we observe Shingles Awareness Week, the IFA is dedicated to raising awareness and advocating for policies that prioritize the health and well-being of older adults. Ensuring that more individuals are

vaccinated against shingles can significantly reduce the burden of the disease, support healthier ageing, and prevent unnecessary health complications.

"Shingles can have a devastating impact on older adults, both physically and mentally," says Katrina Bouzanis, Director of Policy, Advocacy, and Innovation at the IFA. "Increasing awareness about the importance of the shingles vaccine and ensuring equitable access to vaccination programs are essential steps to promote healthy ageing."

For more information on shingles and vaccination options, please visit your local health authority's website or speak with a healthcare provider. If you would like to know more about IFA's efforts on Shingles Awareness Week, please visit the following link: <https://www.vaccines4life.com/engage/shingles-awareness-week-2025/>



About the International Federation on Ageing (IFA)

The [International Federation on Ageing \(IFA\)](#) is an international, non-governmental organization (NGO) with a unique membership base comprising government, NGOs, academics, industry, and individuals in over 80 countries. Now over 45 years old, the IFA has become known as a leading and innovative organization that works across disciplines and sectors toward common goals that improve the lives of older people. Through the IFA's formal relations with the World Health Organization (WHO) and general consultative status at the United Nations and its agencies, the IFA is in the position to advocate directly with member states and contribute to and inform intergovernmental dialogue. Through its [Vaccines4Life](#) program, IFA has worked alongside committed organizations to address barriers to improve adult vaccination rates in the context of healthy ageing.