

National Immunization Awareness Month – Shingrix and Tdap Vaccines

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August is National Immunization Awareness Month and your healthcare team at Smith Pharmacy is here to answer questions and administer routine vaccinations to all of our customers. We want to highlight different vaccines offered at Smith Pharmacy and provide information to help you make informed choices about receiving immunizations.

Shingrix is the recommended vaccine for people 50 years and older to provide protection against shingles (Herpes Zoster). Shingles is a painful skin rash that usually develops along a nerve path on the chest or abdomen, but can appear on the arm, thigh, or head including the ear or eye. The rash will usually blister and scab, then clear up in approximately 7-10 days. As of 2022, Shingrix is now also recommended for patients 18-49 years old with immunocompromising conditions that increase their risk for shingles. Shingles can recur, meaning that all adults who have overcome shingles may be eligible for vaccination to prevent recurrent infection.

Shingles is caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox. If you've had chickenpox, you have the shingles virus. The immune system weakens as you age which increases the chances of the virus reactivating and causing shingles. There are about 1 million cases of shingles in the U.S. each year. The vaccine can help prevent complications from shingles such as postherpetic neuralgia (PHN)-a severe pain that lasts for months or even years in the areas of the healed rash. Other potential complications include scarring, vision complications if the rash appears

around the eye, secondary infections, or partial weakness/paralysis of the areas served by affected nerves.

Shingrix is a two dose vaccine; completion of the series has proven in clinical trials to be over 90% effective. The second dose can be given anytime between two and six months after the first dose.

No vaccine comes without risk, but our pharmacists and nurses are here to help answer any questions about potential side effects and reactions. The most common side effects include pain, redness, swelling at the injection site, muscle pain, tiredness, headache, shivering, fever, and upset stomach.

Shingrix vaccines are given by appointment only so call or ask at the pharmacy to schedule. Smith Pharmacy technicians will bill your prescription insurance. Most Medicare Part D plans cover the vaccine with zero cost to the patient. We will also update the Wisconsin Immunization Registry so your doctor will know you've completed the vaccine series.

Next, we want to highlight a vaccine that protects against three infectious diseases in humans.

The Tdap vaccine protects against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis. It is for children 7 years and older, adolescents and adults. The first dose is usually given around 11-12 years of age with a booster every 10 years or after 5 years if a person experiences a severe or dirty wound or burn. Tdap vaccines are also recommended for women who are pregnant to help protect newborns from pertussis, more commonly known as whooping cough.

Tetanus disease enters the body through cuts or wounds. This painful disease causes stiff muscles which may lead to being unable to open the mouth, having

trouble swallowing or breathing or death.

Diphtheria disease spreads through person to person contact. It can lead to difficulty breathing, heart failure, paralysis or death.

Pertussis disease spreads through person to person and leads to uncontrollable, violent coughing which makes it harder to breath, eat or drink. This disease can be extremely dangerous in babies and young children causing pneumonia, convulsions, brain damage or death. In teenagers and adults, this disease can cause weight loss, loss of bladder control, passing out and rib fractures from intense coughing.

We offer the Tdap vaccine on a walk-in basis. Smith Pharmacy technicians will bill your prescription insurance and update the Wisconsin Immunization Registry (WIR) so your doctor will know you've received the vaccine.

If have additional questions regarding the Tdap or Shingrix vaccines, please reach out to a member of our team at (920) 788-8888. You can also find more information on the CDC's vaccine website. It is our pleasure at Smith Pharmacy to provide vaccines to all of our customers!



Submitted photo

Todd Doxtater, RPh, placing a bandage on the injection site of a patient after he administered the second dose of the Shingrix vaccine in Smith Pharmacy's immunization room.