Introduction

Shingles (herpes zoster) is a virus that infects the nerve and skin surface. It is the same virus that causes chickenpox. Anyone who has been infected with chickenpox can later develop shingles. Shingles produces a painful rash and blisters, usually in a stripe pattern on one side of the body. It most often affects people over age 50. Shingles can be prevented with a vaccine. This policy describes when the shingles vaccine may be considered medically necessary.

Note: The Introduction section is for your general knowledge and is not to be taken as policy coverage criteria. The rest of the policy uses specific words and concepts familiar to medical professionals. It is intended for providers. A provider can be a person, such as a doctor, nurse, psychologist, or dentist. A provider also can be a place where medical care is given, like a hospital, clinic, or lab. This policy informs them about when a service may be covered.

Policy Coverage Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vaccine</th>
<th>Medical Necessity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zostavax® vaccine</td>
<td><strong>Shingles vaccines (Zostavax®) may be considered medically necessary for the following indications:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• This vaccine is covered for adults 60 years of age or older.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Vaccine  |  Medical Necessity
---|---
Note: See Related Information below for Limitations

**Shingrix vaccine**

Shingles vaccines (Shingrix) may be considered medically necessary for the following indications:

- This vaccine is indicated for prevention of herpes zoster (shingles) in adults aged 50 years and older.
- It is not indicated for prevention of primary varicella infection (chickenpox).

Shingrix has been in use since 2017 and is recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) as the preferred shingles vaccine over Zostavax®.

Note: See Related Information below for Limitations

**Coding**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPT</td>
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<tr>
<td>90736</td>
<td>Zoster (shingles) vaccine (HZV), live, for subcutaneous injection (Zostavax®)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90750</td>
<td>Zoster (shingles) vaccine (HZV), recombinant, subunit, adjuvanted, for intramuscular use (Shingrix)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Related Information**
Limitations

**Zostavax®**

- The following are contraindications for this vaccine:
  - HIV+ patients with a CD4+ T lymphocyte count of <200 cells/µL
  - Treatment with drugs that affect the immune system, such as steroids
  - Patients who have a weakened immune system because of:
    - Cancer treatment such as radiation or chemotherapy
    - Cancer affecting the bone marrow or lymphatic system, such as leukemia or lymphoma
  - Pregnancy or nursing mothers (pregnancy should be avoided for three months post vaccination)
  - Active tuberculosis
  - History of anaphylactic/anaphylactoid reaction to gelatin, neomycin or any other component of the vaccine
  - The vaccine should not be used in children

The vaccine should not be used for treatment of Zoster or postherpetic neuralgia (PHN).

**Shingrix**

- Shingrix should not be administered to:
  - A person with a history of severe allergic reaction, such as anaphylaxis, to any component of a vaccine or after a previous dose of Shingrix
  - A person who is known to be seronegative for varicella
  - A person experiencing an acute episode of herpes zoster. Shingrix is not a treatment for herpes zoster or postherpetic neuralgia (PHN). The general guidance for any vaccine is to wait until the acute stage of the illness is over and symptoms abate.
  - Shingrix has not been studied in pregnant women or women who are breastfeeding. Providers should consider delaying Shingrix vaccination for these women.
Evidence Review

Background

Shingles, also known as herpes zoster or varicella zoster, is caused by reactivation of the dormant varicella-zoster virus (VZV). VZV is the same virus that causes chickenpox and stays in the body for life. Anyone who has been infected by chickenpox could develop shingles, though not all will. With increasing age and a weakened immunity to VZV, the virus can reactivate causing painful blisters typically on one side of the body. Shingles is most common in people 50 years of age and older and risk of complications increases with age. Common symptoms associated with shingles includes itching and painful rashes, typically presented as clusters of blisters in a single area of the body. Shingles can lead to complications such as post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN), a persistent nerve pain occurring after the rash has healed.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the new shingles vaccine called Shingrix was licensed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2017. The CDC recommends that healthy adults 50 years and older get two doses of Shingrix, 2 to 6 months apart. Shingrix provides strong protection against shingles and PHN. Shingrix is the preferred vaccine, over Zostavax®, a shingles vaccine in use since 2006.

References


**History**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09/16/19</td>
<td>New policy, approved August 13, 2019, effective January 1, 2020. Shingles vaccines (Zostavax®) may be considered medically necessary for prevention of herpes zoster (shingles) in adults aged 60 and over. Shingles vaccines (Shingrix) may be considered medically necessary for prevention of herpes zoster (shingles) in adults aged 50 years and older.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Disclaimer:** This medical policy is a guide in evaluating the medical necessity of a particular service or treatment. The Company adopts policies after careful review of published peer-reviewed scientific literature, national guidelines and local standards of practice. Since medical technology is constantly changing, the Company reserves the right to review and update policies as appropriate. Member contracts differ in their benefits. Always consult the member benefit booklet or contact a member service representative to determine coverage for a specific medical service or supply. CPT codes, descriptions and materials are copyrighted by the American Medical Association (AMA). ©2019 Premera All Rights Reserved.

**Scope:** Medical policies are systematically developed guidelines that serve as a resource for Company staff when determining coverage for specific medical procedures, drugs or devices. Coverage for medical services is subject to the limits and conditions of the member benefit plan. Members and their providers should consult the member
benefit booklet or contact a customer service representative to determine whether there are any benefit limitations applicable to this service or supply. This medical policy only applies to Individual Plans.
If you need these services, contact the Civil Rights Coordinator.

If you believe that LifeWise has failed to provide these services or discriminated in another way on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex, you can file a grievance with:

Civil Rights Coordinator - Complaints and Appeals
PO Box 91102, Seattle, WA 98111
Toll free 855-332-6396, Fax 425-918-5592. TTY 800-842-5357
Email AppealsDepartmentInquiries@LifeWiseHealth.com

You can file a grievance in person or by mail, fax, or email. If you need help filing a grievance, the Civil Rights Coordinator is available to help you.

You can also file a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights, electronically through the


Deutsche (German):

Italiano (Italian):