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The American Dermatological Association will Co-Sponsor the American Academy of Ophthalmology recommendation on Herpes Zoster (Shingles) Vaccination for Patients 50 Years and Older

One third of the US population is at risk for developing Herpes Zoster (“shingles”) during their lifetime, and those living to 85 years will have a 50% chance of developing the disease. Shingles occurs most often when the varicella-zoster virus (chicken pox virus) is reactivated after years of being dormant. The disease can have devastating outcomes with prolonged intractable pain, and the potential for loss of vision and hearing. A vaccine for Zoster in adults reduces the chance of developing shingles by 51% and when immunized individuals do develop shingles, their cases tend to be less severe. In addition, a recent study demonstrated that between 2006-2013, patients in the vaccine age group (60 years and older) who are at highest risk for developing the disease had reduced emergency department visits for shingles. In 2011, the FDA expanded the age for vaccination to 50 years and older; an age group that has high rates of infection and had the most benefit from the vaccine.

Dermatologists should discuss the well-defined benefits and small risks of VZ vaccination with their eligible patients. Preventive care will continue to be medicine's best hope for gains in population health.

The American Dermatological Association joins the American Academy of Ophthalmology in their recommendation for Shingles vaccines in appropriate patients over the age of 50.