



ASK THE SOCIAL WORKER

Question: My aunt is very sick with shingles. My mother says my aunt could have avoided this painful illness by getting the shingles vaccination. What is shingles? What is the shingles vaccine? Should I get a shingles vaccination? Can I catch shingles from my aunt?

Answer: I am glad you asked about herpes zoster, better known as shingles, and the Zostavax vaccine, which is often called the “shingles vaccine.” The U.S. Food and Drug Administration licensed the Zostavax vaccine for use by people 60 years and older in 2006 to reduce the risk of shingles. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, a federal panel of immunization experts, also voted in 2006 to recommend the Zostavax vaccine to people ages 60 and older. The Zostavax vaccine is a live virus that can boost a person’s immunity against the varicella zoster virus that causes shingles. This is the same virus that also causes chickenpox.

Anyone who has the varicella zoster virus due to a case of chickenpox or the chickenpox vaccine can develop shingles. The varicella zoster virus lies dormant in nerve tissue, but as people age, it can reappear as shingles. You cannot catch shingles from your aunt or anyone who has shingles. However, though it is not common, you could catch the chickenpox from someone who has shingles, if you have never had a case of chickenpox or the chickenpox vaccine.

Shingles is a painful skin rash that develops on one side of the body with clusters of blisters. It is thought that two in every ten people who have the varicella zoster virus will develop shingles later in life, usually after the age of 50. About one in five people who have shingles develop severe pain, known as post-herpetic neuralgia, after the rash clears. This severe pain can continue for weeks, months or years.

There is no way of knowing who will get shingles, but it is important for everyone age 60 and older to discuss the benefits of the Zostavax vaccine with their physician. In clinical trials, the vaccine has reduced the occurrence of shingles by about 50 percent and post herpetic neuralgia by 67 percent. The vaccine is not recommended for people who have ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction to gelatin, the antibiotic neomycin, or any other component of the shingles vaccine.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov); U.S. Food and Drug Administration (www.fda.gov); National Institute on Aging (www.nia.nih.gov).

JOKE OF THE MONTH

**Why don't oysters give to charity?
Because they're shellfish.**

Laughter is known to boost the immune system, lower blood pressure, burn calories and release pleasure-inducing chemicals in the brain.

EDITORS

- Veronica Rosenblatt, MA, MS, CMC
Director of Social Services
- Karen Wiener, MA, MFT, CMC
Manager of Social Services
- Cheryl Cohen, MSW, LCSW
Social Worker



GOOD NEWS FOR MATURE JOB SEEKERS



Today there are a growing number of Web sites to assist workers over the age of 50 in finding employment. In fact, employment opportunities for mature workers who want to delay retirement, seek a second career, or just supplement their retirement income are getting better and better as the nation's 78 million baby boomers retire.

The AARP National Employer Team, a group of companies committed to hiring workers of all ages and to recognizing skills, experience, and leadership of mature workers, is also making it easier for workers over 55 to find employment. While there are many reputable employers looking to hire mature workers, there are also many dishonest and unethical people who will

try to cheat job seekers. To avoid employment scams, never send money or divulge personal information, always confirm what is being offered by the employer, check out the employer's background and office, and question the legitimacy of a job that sounds too good to be true. The following Web sites assist mature workers in finding employment by offering advice, posting employment opportunities, and listing employers who welcome mature workers:

- www.doleta.gov/seniors
- www.retirementjobs.com
- www.aarp.com
- www.seniors4hire.org
- www.workforce50.com

Sources: AARP (www.aarp.org); About.com (www.seniorliving.about.com); U.S. Department of Labor Employment & Training Administration (www.doleta.gov).

NEW ADDITIONS TO THE MPPAF'S NATIONAL RESOURCE DIRECTORY

National Care Planning Council; www.longtermcarelink.net (800) 989-8137

Dedicated to helping the public recognize and implement the need for long-term care planning.

National Respite Locator Service; www.respitelocator.org (800) 473-1727

Assists parents, caregivers, and professionals to find respite services in their state and local area. A free service that delivers programs and strategies to enhance the lives of children, youth and families.

U.S. Administration on Aging; www.aoa.gov (202) 619-0724

Federal agency providing information and advice to older individuals and caregivers. It has a special section, National Family Caregiver Support Program, where families and caregivers can turn for support and assistance.



QUOTE OF THE MONTH
“ Humanity is not yet
ready for either real truth
or real harmony. ”

— Will Rogers

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

Call Karen Wiener, MA, MFT, CMC
Manager of Social Services
(888) 994-3863, ext. 2390 or
e-mail karen@wrinstitute.org.