

Backgrounder: 2024 Shingles Awareness Week
26 February to 3 March 2024

The International Federation on Ageing (IFA) is concerned about the increasing threat that herpes zoster (commonly known as shingles) is posing to older persons as Canada's population continues to age. Older adults are at the greatest risk of shingles, with the highest burden in those aged 50 years and over and with negative health outcomes including bacterial skin infections, postherpetic neuralgia, and even hearing and vision complications. (1,2) To improve public understanding of the risks and complications associated with shingles as well as preventative actions such as vaccination, the IFA is actively engaging in a targeted campaign for Shingles Awareness Week (SAW) 2024, held from 26 February to 3 March. SAW is an opportunity to raise awareness of shingles as a vaccine preventable disease and foster increased knowledge and action.

Amidst the backdrop of the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing and in the context of vaccine hesitancy among the Canadian population, it is of utmost importance to explore health promotion campaigns to increase awareness about vaccine preventable diseases and inform the public about the benefits of a life course approach to immunization. (3)

The IFA Shingles Awareness Week Campaign targets individuals in Canada at risk for shingles, patient and advocacy organizations, and policy makers to address gaps in vaccine uptake amongst those most at risk for shingles. The campaign features a variety of communications, including a podcast episode with Dr. Samir Sinha, Director of Geriatrics at Mount Sinai and the University Health Network Hospitals in Toronto and Director of Health Policy Research at the National Institute of Ageing, and a video of patient perspectives and reflections on shingles. Other elements included are an adaptable resource for civil society organizations, an X / Twitter fact sheet, and a comprehensive message bank designed and curated to equip Canadians with the information necessary to pursue healthy ageing and make informed decisions regarding preventative measures such as vaccination.

Make sure to participate in Shingles Awareness Week by using the hashtag #ShinglesAwarenessWeek in your social media posts, leverage IFA resources, and speak to friends and family about the importance of protecting yourself and others from Shingles!

1. Prevention C for DC and. Cause and Transmission | CDC [Internet]. 2023 [cited 2024 Jan 17]. Available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/shingles/about/transmission.html>
2. Herpes zoster (shingles) vaccine: Canadian Immunization Guide - Canada.ca [Internet]. [cited 2024 Jan 17]. Available from: [https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/canadian-immunization-guide-part-4-active-vaccines/page-8-herpes-zoster-\(shingles\)-vaccine.html#a2](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/canadian-immunization-guide-part-4-active-vaccines/page-8-herpes-zoster-(shingles)-vaccine.html#a2)
3. World Health Organization. Decade of Healthy Ageing Baseline Report [Internet]. Geneva; 2021 [cited 2022 Sep 21]. Available from: <https://apps.who.int/iris/rest/bitstreams/1348996/retrieve>