Herpes Zoster Vaccine – Recommended Usage
The National Advisory Committee on Immunization\(^1\) recommends the herpes zoster (HZ) vaccine for:
- adults 60 years of age and older without contraindications
- adults without a prior history of varicella or documented prior varicella infection
- adults 50-59 years of age may benefit from this vaccine
- adults with inflammatory disorders receiving low-dose immunosuppressive therapy, such as prednisone (<20mg/day), methotrexate (<0.4mg/kg/week), azathioprine (<3.0 mg/kg/day) and 6 mercaptopurine (<1.5 mg/kg/day), may receive the vaccine following review by a health care provider\(^2\)
- adults on anti-TNF biologics may receive the vaccine on a case-by-case basis after review with an expert in immunodeficiency
- adults 50 years of age and older with a prior history of herpes zoster. It is recommended that the vaccine be given at least one year following the last episode of herpes zoster.

Dosage
The herpes zoster vaccine is a single-dose regimen of 0.65 mL given as a subcutaneous injection in the deltoid region of the upper arm.

Contraindications and Precautions
Do NOT give the herpes zoster vaccine to:
- adults with anaphylactic hypersensitivity to any of the vaccine’s components
- adults with congenital or acquired immune deficiency
- adults using immune-suppressive medications, but may be administered to individuals on low-dose immunosuppressive therapy
- pregnant women or adults less than 50 years of age
- adults with active untreated tuberculosis
Deferral should be considered in acute illness, for example, in the presence of fever.

Potential Adverse Reactions
- erythema
- pain or tenderness
- swelling and rash at injection site
- headache

Simultaneous Administration with Other Vaccines
- Trivalent influenza vaccine and the pneumococcal vaccine may be administered concomitantly with the herpes zoster vaccine at a different injection site.
- In general, HZ vaccine may be administered concomitantly with other live vaccines given by the parenteral, oral, or intranasal routes. If two live parenteral vaccines are not administered concomitantly, there should be a period of at least 4 weeks before the second live parenteral vaccine is given.

References
\(^2\) For additional information on the immunization of immunocompromised persons, see the Canadian Immunization Guide, Immunization of Immunocompromised Persons:

More Information
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