

ZOSTAVAX™

Fact Sheet

ZOSTAVAX™ is a powder form of the Oka/Merck strain of live varicella-zoster virus that is attenuated, meaning the potential for the vaccine to cause shingles is decreased. ZOSTAVAX™ uses essentially the same ingredients as VARIVAX®, but has much higher potency in order to induce a significant immune response to the varicella-zoster virus in older adults.¹

Indication

ZOSTAVAX™ is indicated for the prevention of shingles (herpes zoster) in individuals 60 years of age or older.²

Efficacy

In the Shingles Prevention Study (SPS) of 38,546 subjects 60 years of age or older, ZOSTAVAX™ reduced the risk of developing herpes zoster compared with placebo by 51 per cent for all age groups³.

ZOSTAVAX™ also reduced the incidence of severe and long-lasting zoster-associated pain by 73 per cent compared with placebo.⁴

Tolerability

In clinical studies, the most common side effects reported were redness, pain, swelling, itching, warmth and bruising at the injection site.⁵ The overall incidence of vaccine-related injection-site adverse experiences was significantly greater for subjects vaccinated with ZOSTAVAX™ compared to placebo (48 per cent for ZOSTAVAX™ and 17 per cent for placebo).⁶

Headache, fever, rash, allergic reactions and swollen glands were also reported.⁷

Administration

- The vaccine must be stored frozen at an average temperature of -15°C or colder and the diluent should be stored separately at room temperature (20 to 25°C) or in a refrigerator (2 to 8°C).⁸
- The vaccine should be reconstituted immediately upon removal from the freezer.⁹
- The vaccine should be administered immediately after reconstitution to minimize loss of potency.¹⁰ It must be used within 30 minutes post reconstitution.
- Individuals should receive a single dose consisting of the entire content of the vial.¹¹
- The injection should be given subcutaneously and not intravascularly.¹²

Availability

- ZOSTAVAX™ is now available at a list price of \$150.00 per 0.65 mL dose.

¹ National PBM Drug Monograph: Zoster Vaccine, Varicella Virus Vaccine Live (Oka / Merck) (Zostavax™). November 2006. VHA Pharmacy Benefits Management Strategic Healthcare Group and the Medical Advisory Panel. Page 3. (Web site accessed at: http://www.pbm.va.gov/monograph/Zoster_per_cent20Vaccine_per_cent20Monograph.pdf)

² ZOSTAVAX™ Product Monograph for Health Canada dated August 11, 2009. Page 3.

³ IBID. Page 15.

⁴ IBID. Page 17.

⁵ IBID. Page 23.

⁶ IBID. Page 6.

⁷ IBID. Page 23.

⁸ IBID. Page 11.

⁹ IBID. Page 9.

¹⁰ IBID. Page 9.

¹¹ IBID. Page 9.

¹² IBID. Page 8.