

Incidence of herpes zoster up for over 50s with COVID-19 diagnosis

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For adults aged 50 years or older, those with a COVID-19 diagnosis have

an increased risk for developing herpes zoster, according to a study published online March 9 in *Open Forum Infectious Diseases*.

Amit Bhavsar, M.B.B.S., from GSK in Wavre, Belgium, and colleagues compared the incidence of [herpes zoster](#) in those aged 50 years and older diagnosed with COVID-19 and those never diagnosed with COVID-19. A total of 394,677 individuals with COVID-19 were matched to 1,577,346 individuals without COVID-19 by age, sex, herpes zoster risk factors, and health care cost level.

The researchers found that the risk for herpes zoster was increased for individuals diagnosed with COVID-19 versus those without (adjusted incidence rate ratio, 1.15). The increased risk was more pronounced after COVID-19 hospitalization (adjusted incidence rate ratio, 1.21).

"This is the first epidemiological evidence linking prior COVID-19 infection with increased shingles risk among [older adults](#), who are already at heightened risk of shingles due to [age-related decline](#) in immunity," Temi Folaranmi, M.D., vice president and vaccines therapeutic area head of U.S. Medical Affairs at GSK, said in a statement.

"It is important that health care professionals are aware of this potential increased risk so patients can be diagnosed and treated early if they develop shingles following COVID-19. These results also highlight the importance of preventative measures, such as vaccination, to protect the health and well-being of older adults who are at risk for [vaccine-preventable diseases](#) like COVID-19 and [shingles](#)."

More information: Amit Bhavsar et al, Increased Risk of Herpes Zoster in Adults ≥ 50 Years Old Diagnosed With COVID-19 in the United States, *Open Forum Infectious Diseases* (2022). [DOI: 10.1093/ofid/ofac118](#)

Several authors disclosed financial ties to the GSK group of companies.

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