ZosterFluCov lay summary

What was the aim of the study?

The aim was to provide information to help policy makers and the public make decisions about offering or receiving more than one vaccine at a single appointment. The study looked at the immune responses and safety of giving a shingles vaccine) at the same time as either a COVID-19 booster or the influenza (flu) vaccine.

Why did we do this study?

Shingles is a common and painful disease, it can result in long-term pain and in rare cases can even be fatal. It is recommended that all adults in the UK are offered the shingles vaccine on their 65th or 70th birthday. The shingles vaccine consists of two doses. Most people are not taking up the offer of shingles vaccination when they turn 65 or 70 so ways to make it easier to get vaccinated are needed. Giving vaccines at the same time may make it easier as people as it means fewer appointments. To offer vaccines at the same time we need to let people know about what side effects to expect and work out whether the vaccines will work in the same way as when given alone. There is some information available on what happens when the first dose shingles vaccine is given with a COVID-19 or flu vaccine but no information with the second dose. We did this study to provide more complete information when flu or COVID-19 vaccine were given with either the first or second dose of the shingles vaccine.

How did we do this study?

We enrolled people aged 50 and over that had not received a shingles vaccine in the past 5 years. They were randomly allocated into one of five groups, and did not know which group they were in. Participants provided blood samples at each study visit so we could look at their immune response. They also completed an electronic diary in-between visits to record side effects, such as fever and tiredness.

What were our results?

Between October 2023 and February 2025, 967 participants joined the study. Their average age was 60.5 years, and just over half (55%) were female. The immune responses were not affected by co-administration. The number of people who reported severe side effects were low although slightly increased with co-administration. For example 1% (1 out of 100) of people reported severe side effects when receiving COVID-19 vaccine alone but 3% (3 out of 100) reported side effects when the COVID-19 vaccine was given at the same time as the shingles vaccine.

What does this mean?

COVID-19 and flu vaccines can be safely offered with both doses of shingles vaccine.