



FSS Lárionad Faire
um Chosaint Sláinte

25 - 27 Sráid
Ghairdinéir, Baile Átha
Cliath, D01A4A3, Éire

HSE Health Protection
Surveillance Centre

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20th June 2024

Deputy Peadar Tóibín,
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Re: To ask the Minister for Health about the incidence rate of shingles for those aged under 50 and over 50 years, respectively for each of the past five years to date.

Dear Deputy, Tóibín,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

Background related to surveillance systems

Herpes Zoster is not a notifiable disease in Ireland. HPSC monitors Herpes Zoster activity through the sentinel GP surveillance network

- Herpes Zoster (HZ), also known as shingles, is a viral syndrome caused by the reactivation of the varicella-zoster virus. Primary infection with varicella results in varicella (chickenpox). Recurrent infection results in herpes zoster (shingles). Varicella typically affects children aged 2-8 years.[1]
- Herpes Zoster (shingles) can affect people of any age who have previously had chickenpox, but it mainly affects adults aged 40 years and older.[2] Shingles is not subject to seasonal peaks or epidemics.
- HPSC has worked in collaboration with the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP) and the National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL) on the sentinel GP surveillance system since 2000. Currently the Irish sentinel GP network represents approximately 18% of the Irish population. A network of sentinel GPs (located in all HSE-Health regions) report electronically to HPSC, the number of patients who consult with clinical cases of chickenpox (varicella) and shingles (Herpes Zoster) on a weekly basis. The ICGP collates all clinical data from the sentinel GPs. At HPSC, clinical sentinel data are validated and analysed. Data for this analysis was extracted from the HPSC GP sentinel surveillance system database on 14/05/2024. Rates are calculated using CSO census denominator data for the total and associated age stratified population of Ireland. Census data from 2022 are used for these analyses from 2020 - 2024. Table 1 reports the number and rate per 100,000 population of shingles cases by year (2020-2024) for those aged 0-49 years and those aged 50 years and older. The average weekly incidence rate per 100,000 population of shingles cases by age group and year are reported in Table 2. The average weekly rate was calculated by dividing the incidence rate by the number of weeks in the reporting period.

Data for this analysis was extracted from the HPSC GP sentinel surveillance system database on 14/05/2024. Rates are calculated using CSO census denominator data for the total and associated age-stratified population of Ireland. Census data from 2022 are used for these analyses from 2020 - 2024.

Table 1 reports the number and rate per 100,000 population of shingles cases by year (2020-2024) for those aged 0-49 years and those aged 50 years and older. The average



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weekly incidence rate per 100,000 population of shingles cases by age group and year are reported in Table 2. The average weekly rate was calculated by dividing the incidence rate by the number of weeks in the reporting period.

If you require any further information or clarification, please do contact us.

Yours sincerely

Dr Éamonn O'Moore

Director of National Health Protection, HSE.

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