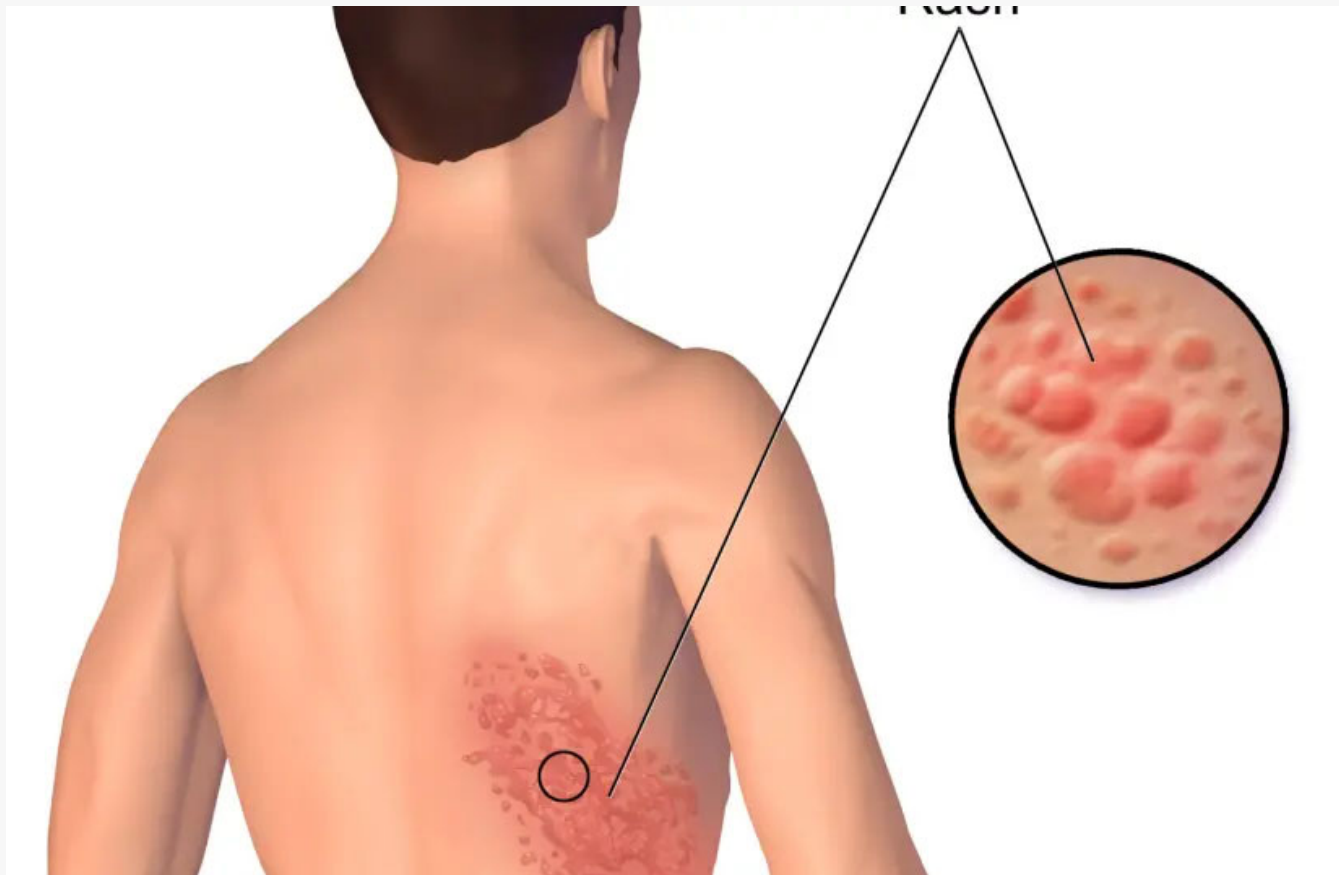


Jerusalem Post > Health & Science

New vaccine side effect? In Israel, six people develop herpes zoster

HZ is characterized by a small, red rash that develops on the skin and itches. If complications develop, it can cause nerve damage and pain, including a prolonged burning session on the skin.

By MAAVAN JAFFE-HOFFMAN APRIL 19, 2021 19:46



A rash from herpes zoster [Illustrative].
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A new study published this month by researchers from Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center and Carmel Medical Center in Haifa found that the risk of developing herpes zoster (HZ) infection following a [coronavirus vaccination](#)

in people with autoimmune inflammatory rheumatic diseases (AIIRD) increases.

“We cannot say the vaccine is the cause at this point,” lead researcher Dr. Victoria Furer of the hospital’s Department of Rheumatology told The Jerusalem Post. “We can say it might be a trigger in some patients.”

HZ is characterized by a small, red rash that develops on the skin and itches. If complications develop, it can cause nerve damage and pain, including a prolonged burning session on the skin even after it goes away.

The study was carried out on 491 patients with AIIRD and 99 controls at the hospitals. Of the 491 patients, 1.2% or six people developed HZ. Five of them got the herpes infection after the first dose and one after the second.

Furer said that five of the six patients who developed HZ were young, had mild cases of autoimmune disease and were taking little if any medications for it, which means they should not have been at increased risk for developing HZ.

“That is why we reported on it,” she said.

HZ tends to develop more in people over the age of 50.

Furer said that since her article, which was published in the peer-reviewed Rheumatology journal on April 12, she has received emails from patients around the world that got HZ after the vaccine.

"It seems that the reason is that there is some association," Furer told the Post.

She said that further research, including a larger epidemiological study, would be needed to prove cause and effect. She said one practical implication might be to recommend that AIIRD patients get vaccinated against HZ before getting their [COVID-19](#) vaccination to reduce the risk.

"We should not scare people," she continued. "The overall message is to get vaccinated. It is just important to be aware."