
Shingles

(Zoster / Herpes Zoster)

What is shingles?

- Shingles is a condition caused by the re-activation of the same virus (varicella-zoster) that causes chickenpox.

How does a person get shingles?

- This virus does not leave the body when the red itchy spots of chickenpox go away. Instead, it becomes inactive in the nerve cells of the body.
- The virus can become active later in life. The cause is unknown.
- Shingles is more common in older adults, in children who had chickenpox before 2 years of age, and in people with a weakened immune system.
- A person who has never had chickenpox can get chickenpox from coming into direct contact with the fluid of a shingles blister.
- A person may be infectious for 1 week after appearance of the blisters.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- The first sign is often a tingling or burning feeling in the skin which may become quite painful. Fever and headache may also occur.
- The skin over the burning area begins to redden and fluid-filled blisters develop after 2 or 3 days. This blister-like rash peaks in 3 to 7 days. Within 14 days, the blisters scab over.

- The blisters form in groups or in a line on one side of the body, often around the chest, abdomen, and eyes.
- In some people, the pain of shingles can last for months or years after the rash has gone.
- People with weakened immune systems can have repeated outbreaks of shingles.

How is shingles treated?

- See a doctor.
- Antiviral drugs may be helpful if started within 3 days of the appearance of the first symptoms.
- Shingles will usually clear up on its own.
- Over-the-counter pain relievers, cool compresses, and soothing baths may help to ease the pain.

How is shingles prevented?

- It is unknown what causes the chickenpox virus to reactivate and cause shingles in some people.
- Exclusion from school or work is not usually necessary.

For more information contact your doctor
or Population and Public Health at **306-655-4612**
