

# SHINGLES

**Shingles** is an infection caused by **(Herpes Zoster)** virus that causes Chickenpox. This virus is called Varicella Zoster. You can't develop Shingles unless you have had a previous infection of Chickenpox (usually as a child). Shingles is also called Herpes Zoster. This infection is most common in people over 50 years old, but young people can have it as well.

## OCCURRENCE OF SHINGLES

If you have had Chickenpox, you are at risk for later developing Shingles. After you recover from the Chickenpox, the virus stays in your body. It moves to the roots of your nerve cells near the Spinal cord and become inactive. Later, if the virus becomes active again, Shingles is the name it's given.

A weakened Immune System seems to allow reactivation of the virus. It can also happen as a complication of Cancer, Aids, Chronic use of steroid drugs, injury to skin, sunburn, and emotional stress.

## SYMPTOMS OF SHINGLES

- Burning, sharp pain, tingling, or numbness in your skin on one side of your body or face.
- A common site is the back or upper abdomen.
- Itching, aching, fever, chills, headache, and upset stomach.

One to 14 days after you start feeling pain, you will notice a rash of small blisters or reddened skin. Within a few days after they appear, the blisters will turn yellow, then dry and crust over. Over the next 2 weeks the crusts drop and the skin continues to heal. In some cases the pain can last for weeks, months, or years after the rash heals. This is called Postherpetic Neuralgia (Nerve damage). Shingles are not contagious, however, if you have never had Chickenpox, you may get Chicken pox from close contact with someone who has Shingles because the blisters contain the Chickenpox virus. If you have Shingles, make sure that anyone who has

not had Chickenpox or the Chickenpox shot does not come in contact with your blisters until the blisters are completely dry (especially children).

## DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

See your Healthcare Provider. The diagnosis is usually obvious from the appearance of the skin and lab tests that look for the virus in the fluid from a blister.

- Antiviral medicines are given such as Acyclovir or Corticosteroids.
- Pain medicines may also be prescribed .
- Antibacterial salves or lotions to help prevent bacterial infection of the blisters.
- Rest in bed during the early stages if you have a fever.
- Put cool moist washcloths on the rash and try not to let clothing rub against the rash.

## PREVENTION OF SHINGLES

If you have never had Chickenpox, you can get a shot to help prevent infection with the Chickenpox virus.

If you have had Chickenpox, a vaccine called Zostavax is available for people 60 years of age and older. The vaccine can help or lessen the symptoms of Shingles. It can't be used to treat Shingles once you have it.

The rash from Shingles will heal in one to three weeks; the pain will usually go away 3 to 5 weeks. You can protect your Immune System and lessen your chances of getting Shingles by trying to keep stress under control by exercising regularly and eating a healthy diet.

*"Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for thou art my praise."*

*Jeremiah 17:14*