

SHINGLES AND THE SHINGLES VACCINE

Shingles, also called herpes zoster, is a painful skin rash caused by the Varicella Zoster virus. This is the same virus that causes chickenpox. After you have had the chicken pox the virus lays dormant (inactive) in your nerves and years later the virus can become active. The blisters may wrap around the middle of your back to the middle of you chest. They usually develop only on one side of your body. They can also appear on one side of your face and around your eye.

Symptoms

- Pain, burning, tingling will occur in the area of the rash. These can be the first symptoms
- A red rash that starts a few days after the pain that become blisters
- Itching, fever and chills
- Blisters usually crust over in 7-10 days

Areas of Concern

- Shingles occur more often in adults over the age of 60, but anyone can get them if they have had chickenpox.
- People with weakened immune systems such as: HIV/AIDS, receiving treatments of steroids, radiation, chemotherapy, or a history of bone or lymphatic cancer
- A person with shingles can spread the virus through direct contact to the open sores to anyone who has not had chickenpox. Those at greater risk include: immune deficiencies, anyone who has never had chickenpox, newborns, and pregnant women.
- Seek medical treatment if you suspect shingles, have pain or a rash near eyes or on the face. Nerve damage from shingles can cause hearing loss or vision problems.
- Pain can continue after the rash is gone and this is called postherpetic neuralgia.

Provided by Community of Christ Health Ministries Association
816-833-1000 ext 1262 or www.HMACofChrist.org

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Treatments and Medications

Prompt treatment can ease pain, speed healing and reduce risk factors. Pain medications, antiviral and anti-inflammatory drugs are some of the medications used and/or over the counter pain medications. Get plenty of rest and depending on your pain level will determine your level of activity.

Shingles Vaccine

Varicella-zoster vaccine (**Zostavax**) can help to prevent shingles in adults age 60 and older who have had chickenpox. The chickenpox vaccine and the shingles vaccine does not guarantee you won't get the chickenpox or the shingles. It can reduce the severity and complications of the disease.

- Zostavax is a live single injection given in the upper arm. Common side effects can be redness, pain swelling, and itching at the injection site.
- Zostavax is a prescription drug covered under Medicare Part D. Coverage and payments vary. You may have to pay full price and be reimbursed by your health plan.
- Always check your health insurance coverage and reimbursement before getting the injection. There maybe a form to take to the facility giving the injection.
- Some doctor's offices, pharmacy's with nurses, and city and county health departments' give the injections.

The shingles vaccine is not recommended if you:

- Have ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction to gelatin, the antibiotic neomycin or any other component of the shingles vaccine.
- Have a weakened immune system from HIV/AIDS or another disease that affects your immune system
- Are receiving medical treatments such as steroids, radiation and chemotherapy
- Have a history of bone marrow or lymphatic cancer
- Have active untreated tuberculosis

Resources: www.MayoClinic.com, www.Merck.com from "Partners in Health Services" - Parish Nurse Newsletter, and www.CDC.gov

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