

Talking about
Shingles



*It's Your Health.
Protect yourself.
Protect your family.
Protect your school.*





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WHAT

What is “Shingles”?

“Shingles” (also known as “Herpes Zoster,” or simply “Zoster”) occurs when the Varicella-Zoster virus (VZV)—the same virus that causes Chickenpox—is reactivated in the body. Like all herpes viruses, VZV remains in the body for life.¹

After a person has recovered from Chickenpox, the virus remains inactive in the nerve cells. Shingles occurs when the virus becomes active again in these nerves, years later.² There is no known trigger for the reactivation of the virus.

Shingles is identified by a painful skin rash, often with blisters. Only someone who has had Chickenpox can get Shingles. In rare events, those who have received the Chickenpox vaccine, but have not had Chickenpox, can also get Shingles.³



SYMPTOMS

What are the symptoms of Shingles?

Early signs of Shingles include burning or shooting pain and tingling or itching, usually on one side of the body or face. Blisters then form and last from one to 14 days.

Pain from Shingles may last for weeks, months or even years after the blisters have healed; at times this pain can be very severe and interfere with daily activities.⁴

If you believe you have symptoms of Shingles, it is important that you contact your health care provider immediately since treatment, if appropriate, must be started quickly in order to lessen the severity of the Shingles outbreak.



At least 1 million people a year in the United States get Shingles. ⁸

WHO

Who is at risk for Shingles?

You cannot develop Shingles unless you have had an earlier exposure to Chickenpox, and most people who get Chickenpox are at risk for Shingles.⁵

Shingles may develop in any age group but is most common in people aged 50 years and older. The risk

of getting Shingles increases as a person ages.⁶ It is also more common in people whose immune systems are weakened because of a disease such as cancer, or drugs such as steroids or chemotherapy.⁷



SPREAD

Is Shingles contagious?

Unlike the Chickenpox, Shingles is not spread through sneezing, coughing or casual contact.

If an adult or child has not had Chickenpox or the Chickenpox vaccine, but has direct contact with the Shingles rash on someone else, they may develop Chickenpox, not Shingles.⁹

The risk of spreading the Shingles virus is low if the rash is covered. People with Shingles should keep the rash covered, not touch or scratch the rash, and wash their hands often to prevent spreading the virus through direct contact.¹⁰



PROTECT

How can I protect myself?



There is no cure for Shingles; however, a vaccine was licensed in 2006 for people aged 60 years and older.

In clinical trials, the vaccine reduced the risk of Shingles by 50 percent. It was also shown to reduce pain in people who developed Shingles even after receiving the vaccine.¹¹

The Shingles vaccine is a preventive therapy and is **not** a treatment for those who are presently experiencing Shingles.

WHEN

What if I've already had Shingles?

People who have already experienced Shingles **can be** vaccinated.¹²

I'm pregnant; should I receive the vaccine?

A woman who is pregnant or believes she might be pregnant should not receive the Shingles vaccine. Women should not become pregnant until at least 4 weeks after getting the Shingles vaccine.¹³



Who should not be vaccinated?

A person should not receive the Shingles vaccine who:

- Is newly pregnant
- Has already received the Chickenpox vaccine
- Has ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction to:
 - Gelatin
 - Neomycin (an antibiotic)
 - Any other component of the Shingles vaccine*

- Has a weakened immune system because of current:
 - AIDS, or another disease that affects the immune system;
 - Treatment with drugs that affect the immune system;
 - Cancer treatment, such as radiation or chemotherapy;
 - Cancer affecting the bone marrow or lymphatic system, such as leukemia or lymphoma.

Anyone with a moderate or acute illness should usually wait until they recover before getting the Shingles vaccine. This includes anyone with a temperature of 101.3°F or higher.¹⁴

*** Consult a doctor** if you have known allergies to ensure that you will not have a reaction to the vaccine.

SIDE EFFECTS

Are there any side effects to the Shingles vaccine?

The Shingles vaccine, like any medication, may result in certain side effects. Mild problems such as redness, soreness, swelling or itching at the site of injection, or headaches could develop as a result of the vaccine. No serious problems have been identified with the Shingles vaccine.

How can I learn more?

If you have further questions or concerns regarding the Shingles vaccine you should contact your health care provider. Bring this brochure with you to your visit to help facilitate the conversation.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is also available to answer vaccine-specific questions at: 1-800-232-4636 (1-800-CDC-INFO) or <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines>.



REFERENCES

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RESOURCES

The NEA Health Information Network (NEA HIN) is the non-profit health and safety affiliate of the National Education Association. It provides health and safety information, materials, programs, and services to NEA's members and the students they serve. The mission of NEA HIN is to improve the health and safety of the school community by developing and disseminating information and programs that educate and empower school professionals and positively impact the lives of students.

Founded in 1987, NEA HIN takes on some of the nation's most critical public health issues as it develops and delivers timely health and safety programs designed to improve the quality of life impacting the school environment. NEA HIN works in the areas of disease prevention and management, mental health and wellness, environmental health, and school and community safety.

For more information about NEA HIN, visit www.neahin.org.

For additional information, see:

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
Adult Vaccination Information**
www.cdc.gov/vaccines/spec-grps/adults.htm

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
Vaccines and Preventable Diseases:
Shingles (Herpes Zoster) Vaccination**
www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/shingles/default.htm

Immunization Action Coalition
www.immunize.org

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