

SHINGLES FACT SHEET

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

What is shingles?

Shingles is a painful rash caused by the varicella zoster virus. This is the same virus that causes chickenpox. After a person recovers from chickenpox, the virus stays in the body. The virus can reactivate years later, causing shingles. 1 in 3 people in the United States will develop shingles.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- Painful rash that develops on one side of the face or body. The rash will form blisters that scab over.
- Most commonly, the rash occurs in a single stripe around the left or right side of the body.
- Fever
- Headache
- Chills
- Upset stomach

Typically, the rash will scab over in 7 to 10 days and clear up in 2-4 weeks.

How can it be prevented?

- Get the shingles vaccine (Shingrix).
- Get the chickenpox vaccine (Varivax or ProQuad). It is recommended for children and adults without a history of chickenpox.

If you never get chickenpox, you will never develop shingles.

How is it spread?

You can NOT get shingles from someone who has shingles.

You CAN, however, get chickenpox from someone who has shingles, if you have never had chickenpox or the chickenpox vaccine. In this case, the virus is spread through direct contact with fluid from the rash blisters.

How is it treated?

- Several antivirals are available. These will shorten the length and severity of the illness. Speak to your healthcare provider to discuss treatment recommendations.
- Common pain medications can reduce the pain. Wet compresses, calamine lotion, and colloidal oatmeal baths may reduce the itching.

What should you do if you have shingles?

- Cover the rash.
- Avoid touching or scratching the rash.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid contact with people with weakened immune systems, premature infants, and pregnant women who have never had chickenpox or the chickenpox vaccine.

More Information: <http://www.cdc.gov/shingles>

This FACT SHEET is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a healthcare provider. For more information call your healthcare provider.

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