



## Shingles (Herpes Zoster)

### What is shingles?

Shingles, also known as herpes zoster, is a painful skin rash caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox (varicella zoster virus). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly one out of three people in the United States will develop shingles.



Skin rash caused by shingles

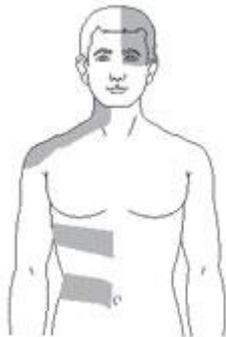
### What causes shingles?

After a person recovers from chickenpox, the virus (varicella zoster virus) stays sleeping in the body. The virus does not cause disease during this time, but it can wake up years later. It is not clear why the virus wakes up, but if it does, it causes shingles.

### Who gets shingles?

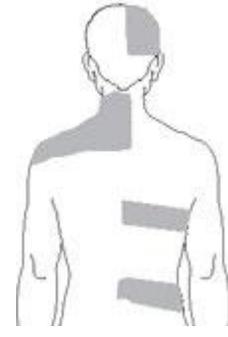
Anyone, including children, can get shingles if they had chickenpox. The risk of shingles is greater as people get older. About half of all cases are among men and women 60 years or older. If you received the chickenpox vaccine, your risk for shingles is much lower than if you did not get the vaccine and were sick with chickenpox naturally.

### What are the symptoms of shingles?



Common rash patterns of Shingles (Front view)

Shingles usually starts as a painful rash on one side of the face or body. The rash forms blisters that typically scab over in 7-10 days and clear up within 2-4 weeks. Before the rash develops, there is often pain, itching, and tingling in the area where the rash appears. This may happen anywhere from 1 to 5 days before the rash appears. Most commonly, the rash occurs in a single stripe around either the left or the right side of the body. In other cases, the rash occurs on one side of the face.



Common rash patterns of Shingles (Back view)

In rare cases (usually among people with weakened immune systems), the rash may be more widespread and look similar to a chickenpox rash. Shingles can also affect one of the eyes and cause severe problems. Other symptoms of shingles can include fever, headache, chills, and upset stomach. Some people who have shingles get severe pain where they had the shingles rash AFTER the rash has gone. This is called “post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN)”. PHN can be severe. Although it usually goes away in a few weeks or months, it can come back.

### Is shingles contagious?

The germ that causes shingles can be passed to anyone who has not had chickenpox and was not vaccinated against chickenpox. This germ can cause **chickenpox** in those exposed, but cannot directly cause shingles. The germ is spread through contact with the fluid from the rash blisters and is not as contagious as chickenpox. Shingles germs can only spread after the blisters appear and before the blisters form scabs.

**CONTINUED**

If you have shingles:

- Keep the rash covered
- Do not touch or scratch the rash
- Wash your hands often
- Until your rash develops scabs, avoid contact with
  - Pregnant women who have never had chickenpox or the chickenpox vaccine;
  - Premature or low birth weight infants; and
  - People with weakened immune systems (such as those with HIV)

### How is shingles treated?

Several prescription medicines may help the shingles get better more quickly. These need to be started early, so if you think you have shingles, contact your healthcare provider as soon as possible. Pain medicine may be used to relieve the pain cause by shingles and wet compresses, calamine lotion, and oatmeal baths may relieve some itching but it does not treat the infection.

### How can I prevent shingles?

The shingles vaccine is the only way to reduce your risk of getting shingles. The vaccine is recommended for everyone ages 50 years and older. Even people who have had shingles in the past can get the vaccine to help prevent future infections. See your healthcare provider to get the shingles vaccine.

### Is the shingles vaccine safe?

Yes, it is safe. Minor reactions can occur such as pain and redness at the injection site, headache, fatigue or a vague feeling of discomfort.

### Chickenpox vs. Shingles

	<b>Chickenpox</b>	<b>Shingles</b>
<b>What causes it?</b>	Varicella zoster virus	Varicella zoster virus
<b>Is it contagious?</b>	Very contagious	Not as contagious as chickenpox
<b>How does it spread?</b>	Spreads in the air through coughing or sneezing or touching or breathing in the virus particles that come from chickenpox blisters	Spread only by directly touching the fluid from blisters in the rash
<b>Who is at risk of getting it?</b>	People who have never had chickenpox or never received the chickenpox vaccine	Anyone who has had chickenpox may develop shingles
<b>Is there a vaccine?</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Who should get the vaccine?</b>	Children are routinely vaccinated. Adolescents and adults who do not have evidence of prior chickenpox disease should also be vaccinated.	People 50 years or older, regardless if they had had chickenpox

