

WHAT CAN I DO IF I HAVE SHINGLES?

- Antiviral medications are available that reduce the symptoms, severity and duration of the infection. You should discuss this with your doctor
- If you are bothered by pain tell your doctor who may prescribe pain medication
- Take medication as directed
- Avoid perfumed soaps
- Keep the rash clean and dry
- Rest, drink fluids and eat well
- Do not touch or scratch the rash. Scratching can cause infection and delay healing and leave scars
- Keep blisters covered where possible
- Always remember to wash your hands if you touch the blisters

HAND HYGIENE

Special care must be paid to hand hygiene as it is the best way to prevent the spread of germs. **Good hand hygiene includes these steps:**

Alcohol-Based Hand Rub

- Apply to palm of one hand
- Rub hands together, covering all of hands and fingers
- Rub until hands feel dry
- If hands are visibly dirty you must wash them before using Alcohol Based Hand Rub

Hand Washing

- Use warm running water and soap
- Spend at least **15-30** seconds lathering and washing hands
- Rub hands together, paying attention to finger tips, around rings and thumbs
- Rinse thoroughly
- Dry with paper towel and turn off tap with paper towel
- Dispose of paper towel in the garbage.

IT'S OK TO ASK NURSES , DOCTORS AND OTHER HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS IF THEY HAVE CLEANED THEIR HANDS

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SHINGLES (HERPES ZOSTER)



INFECTION PREVENTION
& CONTROL PROGRAM

WHAT IS SHINGLES?

- Shingles is a painful disease caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox, *varicella zoster*
- After the symptoms of chickenpox disappear, the virus stays in the body where it remains inactive
- When the virus reactivates it is called shingles. The virus tends to reactivate when a person's immune system is weakened due to illness or age.

WHO CAN GET SHINGLES?

- Approximately 90% of Canadians have had chickenpox and are at risk of shingles.
- You have a greater risk of getting shingles if you are older than 50 or have a weak immune system.
- Most people only have shingles once in a lifetime, but it is possible to have it again
- You can not get shingles from a contact with shingles

HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF AGAINST SHINGLES?

- The shingles vaccine is the best protection against the virus.
- Adults over 60 should get the vaccine. Some people age 50-60 may benefit from the vaccine-ask your healthcare provider

HOW IS THE VIRUS SPREAD?

- The virus is present in the fluid of the shingles blisters. The virus is spread through direct contact with these blisters and can cause chickenpox but not shingles in someone who has never had chickenpox or the chickenpox vaccine.
- If you cover blisters with a dressing that absorbs fluid you can help prevent the spread of the virus to other people.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF SHINGLES?

- You may feel itching, tingling, burning or pain in a specific area.
- After two or three days, blisters will appear, usually on one side of the body or face
- New blisters will appear for about a week
- The blisters will dry out and crust over 2-4 weeks
- When the rash is at its peak, symptoms will range from mild itching to severe pain. For most people the pain lessens as the rash heals.

CAN SHINGLES CAUSE COMPLICATIONS?

- The most common complication is persistent pain which can last for weeks to months
- The chances of getting this prolonged pain increases with age
- If you have shingles near your eye, it is important to see your doctor.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHILE IN HOSPITAL?

Special precautions will be taken while you are infectious.

- A sign may be posted
- You may need to stay in your room
- Keep the blisters covered until they are dry and crusted
- Staff may wear gown, gloves, or a mask when providing direct care.
- All staff and visitors must clean their hands when they enter or leave your room.
- Visitors should be limited to people who have had chickenpox or the Varicella vaccine.