

FAST FACTS: Shingles

Shingles affects approximately 1 in 3 adults in the US with about half of all cases affecting adults over the age of 60. The same virus that causes chickenpox also causes shingles. Unfortunately, exposure to chickenpox does not provide immunity to shingles. This painful virus creates a rash on one side of the face or body. The rash presents as blisters, which then scab over and clear in a process that lasts anywhere from two to four weeks. Pain along nerve endings is a complication of shingles. The risk for this pain increases with age and causes moderate to severe pain that can last months or even years.



✓ Symptoms and Impact

- Blisters are infectious until crusted over and dry
- Individuals most at risk have never had chicken pox or the vaccine for chicken pox
- Most commonly presents across the torso but only on one side of the body
- Other symptoms may include pain, itching, tingling, headache, light sensitivity, and fatigue
- Complications such as scarring, muscle weakness, and skin infection may occur
- Additional risk of hearing or vision loss may occur if rash is across face or head

✓ Possible Interventions

- Vaccination is the ONLY prevention and is recommended for adults 60 and older.
- Non-Drug Treatments
 - Distraction such as, reading, TV, music, pray, other activities, etc.
 - Warm compress to affected area
- Antiviral medications prescribed by the healthcare provider are used to shorten time and intensity of the infection.
- Pain control should be part of treatment. Possible treatments are:
 - Lidocaine skin patches
 - Tricyclic Antidepressants
 - Anticonvulsants
 - Opioids

✓ What Else You Should Do

- Write down and share information about your loved one's pain with their healthcare provider.
- Use a [Pain Diary](#) to note important information useful to the healthcare provider.
- Encourage your loved one to try a non-drug treatment and document the impact on their pain in their Pain Diary.

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References

WebMD. 2021. *Shingles*. <https://www.webmd.com/skin-problems-and-treatments/shingles/understanding-shingles-treatment>.

Mayo Clinic. September 17, 2021. *Shingles*. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/shingles/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20353060>.