

FAST FACTS: Shingles

Shingles, also known as herpes zoster, 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 presents on one side of the face or body causing a rash-like condition which raises, blisters, then scabs over and clears 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

- Lesions are infectious until crusted over & dry
- Individuals who have not had chicken pox or the varicella vaccine are most at risk
- Most commonly appears across the body trunk but does not cross the body's midline
- Other than rash, symptoms may include pain, itching, tingling, headache, light sensitivity, and fatigue
- Complications such as scarring, muscle weakness, & 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
- Antiviral medications are used to shorten time of infection and intensity
- Analgesia for pain should be part of treatment such as:
 - Lidocaine skin patches
 - Tricyclic Antidepressants
 - Anticonvulsants
 - Opioids
- Non-Drug Treatments include: maintaining a calm environment (i.e. calming music, etc.), distraction, meditation, etc.

✓ **What Caregivers can do to help their loved one with Shingles Pain**

- Write down and share information about your loved one's pain with their provider
- Consider using a [Pain Diary](#) to note important information useful to the provider
- Encourage your loved one to try a non-drug treatment to decrease pain

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