

## SHINGLES (HERPES ZOSTER)

### CAUSE

Varicella-zoster virus (VZV), the same virus that causes chickenpox. After a person recovers from chickenpox, the virus stays dormant (inactive) in the body. For reasons that are not fully known, the virus can reactivate years later, causing shingles.

### SYMPTOMS

Shingles is a **painful rash** that develops on one side of the face or body. The rash forms blisters that typically scab over in 7 to 10 days and clears up within 2 to 4 weeks. Before the rash develops, people often have pain, itching, or tingling in the area where the rash will develop. Other symptoms of shingles can include fever, headache, chills, or upset stomach.

### SPREAD

Shingles cannot be passed from one person to another. However, the virus that causes shingles, the varicella zoster virus, can be spread from a person with active shingles to another person who has never had chickenpox. In such cases, the person exposed to the virus might develop chickenpox, but they would not develop shingles. The virus is spread through direct contact with fluid from the rash blisters caused by shingles.

### INCUBATION PERIOD (time from exposure to onset of symptoms)

Variable (since time of exposure to varicella-zoster virus)

### CONTAGIOUS PERIOD

In an otherwise healthy person, from the start of the rash until all the blisters have crusted.

### EXCLUSION

Child care and School: None, if rash/blisters can be covered. If blisters cannot be covered, exclude until the blisters have crusted.

### TREATMENT

Antiviral medications may be prescribed.

**DO NOT GIVE ASPIRIN or OTHER SALICYLATE CONTAINING MEDICATIONS TO ANY CHILD OR ADOLESCENT UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE.**

### PREVENTION/CONTROL

- The only way to reduce the risk of developing shingles and the long-term pain from post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN) is to **get vaccinated**. CDC recommends that people **aged 60 years** and older get one dose of shingles vaccine.
- If you have shingles:
  - Keep the rash covered.
  - Avoid touching or scratching the rash.
  - Wash your hands often to prevent the spread of varicella zoster virus.
- Until your rash has developed crusts, 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 people receiving immunosuppressive medications or undergoing chemotherapy, organ transplant recipients, and people with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection.

For more information please contact Contra Costa Public Health at 925-313-6740 and visit our website at <http://cchealth.org/cd/>