

# Shingles

## What is shingles?

- Shingles is caused by the varicella zoster virus (VZV), the same virus that causes chickenpox.
- After a person recovers from chickenpox, the virus stays dormant (inactive) in the body.
- The virus may reactivate years later, causing shingles.
- Shingles is not caused by the same virus that causes genital herpes, a sexually transmitted disease.

## What are the symptoms of shingles?

- 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.
- From 1 to 5 days before the rash develops, people often have pain, itching, or tingling in the area where the rash appears.
- Most of the time the rash appears in a single stripe around either the left or the right side of the body. Sometimes, the rash occurs on one side of the face. In rare cases, people with weakened immune systems, may develop a more widespread rash that looks similar to a chickenpox rash.
- Shingles can affect the eye and cause loss of vision.
- Other symptoms of shingles can include:
  - Fever
  - Headache
  - Chills
  - Upset stomach

## How does shingles spread?

- A person with shingles cannot spread shingles to anyone.
- A person with shingles can spread chickenpox to a person who has never had chickenpox.



- The virus is spread through direct contact with fluid from the rash blisters.
- Shingles is less contagious form of the virus than chickenpox.
- Once the rash has crusted over, the person is no longer contagious.

### **How do I stop the spread?**

- 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
    - People with weakened immune systems

### **Is there a treatment for shingles?**

- Your doctor may prescribe an antiviral medicine to treat shingles.
- Antiviral medicines will help shorten the length and severity of the illness.
- Antiviral medicines must be started as soon as possible after the rash appears.
- Over-the-counter pain medicine may help with the pain.
- Wet compresses, calamine lotion, and colloidal oatmeal baths may help relieve some of the itching.

### **How can I prevent getting shingles?**

- The only way to reduce the risk of developing shingles is to get vaccinated.
- ADPH recommends people aged 60 years and older get one dose of shingles vaccine.
- Talk with your healthcare professional if you have questions about shingles vaccine.
- Shingles vaccine is available in pharmacies and doctor's offices.

### **Where can I find more information?**

- Go to [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov) and type Shingles in SEARCH box.

