

# May's Topic: Shingles

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## HEALTHCARE CLINIC HOURS:

Monday-Wednesday, Friday

8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Thursday

9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

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# Shingles

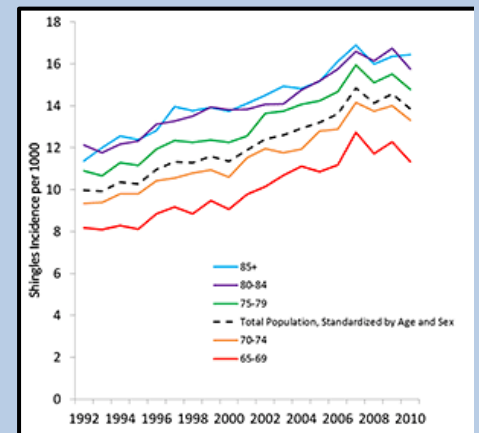
## What is Shingles?<sup>1</sup>

Shingles (also known as zoster or herpes zoster) is a painful skin rash caused by the varicella zoster virus. This virus is the same virus that causes chickenpox. If you ever had chickenpox, you are at risk of getting shingles.

## How common is Shingles?<sup>1,2</sup>

- Currently 1 million people in the United States get shingles every year.
- About 1 out of every 3 people will get shingles in their lifetime.
- About half of all cases occur in men and women age 60 years old or older.
- The risk of shingles increases as you get older.
- Shingles is gradually increasing among adults in the United States.

## Shingles Rates in People Older than 65 Years, United States, 1992 – 2010<sup>2</sup>



Data Source:

<http://annals.org/article.aspx?articleid=1784289>

## Who is at higher risk of getting shingles?<sup>1</sup>

### Some people are at greater risk of getting shingles, including:

- People who have certain medical conditions that keep their immune systems from working properly, such as certain cancers like leukemia and lymphoma, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), solid organ transplantation, bone marrow transplantation, and autoimmune/inflammatory diseases.
- Receive immunosuppressive drugs, such as steroids (eg. prednisone), drugs given after organ transplantation (eg. Cellcept<sup>®</sup>, Sandimmune<sup>®</sup>), and drugs given for autoimmune conditions (eg. Humira<sup>®</sup>, Enbrel<sup>®</sup>, Cimzia<sup>®</sup>, Stelara<sup>®</sup>, Xeljanz<sup>®</sup>)

## What does shingles look like?<sup>5</sup>

Shingles on waist:



Shingles on face:



Shingles on neck:



Shingles on face:

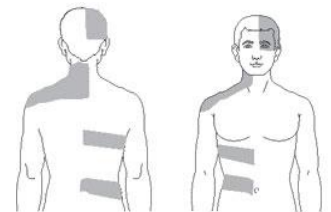


## What causes shingles?<sup>1</sup>

Shingles is caused by the varicella zoster virus (VZV), the same virus that causes chickenpox. The virus stays dormant (inactive) in the body after someone recovers from chickenpox. For reasons, not fully known, the virus can reactivate years later, causing shingles. Shingles can occur at any age, even in children, but it is more prevalent in older adults, those ages 60 year old or older. Shingles is not caused by the same virus that causes genital herpes, a sexually transmitted disease.

## What are the signs and symptoms?<sup>3</sup>

- Shingles is a painful rash that develops on one side of the face or body. The rash forms blisters that scab over in 7 to 10 days, and clears up within 2 to 4 weeks.
- Before the rash develops, people will often have pain, itching, or tingling in the area where the rash will develop. This may occur 1 to 5 days before the rash appears.
- Commonly, the rash occurs in a single around either side of the body. In other cases the rash occurs on one side of the face. In rare cases, usually among people with weakened immune systems, the rash may be more widespread. Shingles can also affect the eye and cause blindness.
- Other symptoms include: fever, headache, chills, and upset stomach.



## What are the complications associated with shingles?<sup>2,4</sup>

The most common complication of shingles is a condition called **post-herpetic neuralgia** (PHN). People with PHN have severe pain in the areas where they had the shingles rash, even after the rash clears up.

The pain from PHN may be severe and debilitating, but it usually resolves in a few weeks or months in most patients. Some people can have pain from PHN for many years.

As people get older, they are more likely to develop PHN, and the pain is more likely to be severe. PHN can occur in up to one-third of untreated people who are 60 years of age and older.

Shingles may lead to serious complication involving the eye. Very rarely, shingles can also lead to pneumonia, hearing problems, blindness, brain inflammation, or death.

## Is shingles contagious?<sup>6</sup>

Shingles **cannot** be passed from one person to another.

However, the virus that causes shingles (varicella zoster) can 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. The virus is spread through direct contact with fluid from the rash blisters caused by shingles.

A person is **not** infectious before the blisters appear and once the rash has developed crusts.

### If you have shingles:

- Keep the rash covered
- Avoid touching or scratching the rash
- Wash hands often to prevent spread of the virus
- Until your rash has developed crusts, avoid contact with:
  - Pregnant women who never had chickenpox or the chickenpox vaccine (Varivax<sup>®</sup>)
  - Premature or low birth weight infants
  - People with weakened immune systems (people undergoing chemotherapy, people with HIV, organ transplant recipients, or those receiving immunosuppressive medications (eg. Humira<sup>®</sup>, Enbrel<sup>®</sup>, Cellcept<sup>®</sup>))

## How is shingles treated?<sup>7</sup>

Given that shingles is a viral infection, the only way to treat it is with the use of antiviral medications (eg. Valtrex<sup>®</sup>, acyclovir). These medicines help shorten the length and severity of shingles, but they need to be started as soon as possible after the rash appears.

Pain medications (eg. gabapentin, lidocaine) may help relieve the pain caused by shingles. Wet compresses, calamine lotion, and colloidal oatmeal baths may help relieve some of the itching.

## What can I do to prevent shingles?<sup>8</sup>

### Get Vaccinated!!!

**CDC recommends that people aged 60 years or older get 1 dose of shingles vaccine.**

Zostavax<sup>®</sup> is the only shingles vaccine currently available. This vaccine reduces the risk of developing shingles by 51% and post-herpetic neuralgia by 67%. Even if you have had shingles, it is still recommended to get the vaccine.

Zostavax<sup>®</sup> is available in pharmacies and doctor's offices.

**You can even get your shingles vaccine at the State Wellness Center for free if you qualify!**

Since Zostavax<sup>®</sup> is a live vaccine, there are some people that should not get the vaccine, including:

- If you ever had a life-threatening or severe allergic reaction to gelatin (Jell-O<sup>®</sup>) or neomycin (Neosporin<sup>®</sup>).
- If you have a weakened immune system due to HIV/AIDS, leukemia, or lymphoma.
- If you take certain medications or therapies that lower your immune system – steroids, chemotherapy or radiation, immunosuppressants (Cellcept<sup>®</sup>, Humira<sup>®</sup>, Enbrel<sup>®</sup>, Sandimmune<sup>®</sup>, Imuran<sup>®</sup>, Xeljanz<sup>®</sup>, Stelara<sup>®</sup>)
- If you have a fever of 101.3°F or higher
- Women who are pregnant



Picture source: <http://www.webmd.com/vaccines/ss/slideshow-adult-vaccines>

## References:

1. Shingles: Overview. (2016, March 15). Retrieved April 25, 2017, from <https://www.cdc.gov/shingles/about/overview.html>
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8. What Everyone Should Know about Shingles Vaccine. (2016, November 22). Retrieved April 25, 2017, from <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/shingles/public/index.html>



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APPOINTMENT  
TODAY!**

**(334) 263-8470**

## State Wellness Center

101 S. Union Street  
Montgomery, AL 36104

All active employees, covered spouses of active employees, non-Medicare retirees and covered non-Medicare spouses of retirees that use the State Employees' Health Insurance Plan (Group 13000) as their primary insurance plan are eligible for a wellness premium discount. Each wellness plan year is November 1 through October 31.

SEIB and Local Government employees along with SEIB retirees are able to use the State Wellness Center Pharmacy. The pharmacy offers various over the counter products at discounted prices and a **free medication delivery service**. Delivery can be provided to the patients located in Montgomery. Please designate which site you would like your medication delivered to, and if it is to your residence someone must be available at the home to receive the delivery.

## State Wellness Center Healthcare Clinic

The SEIB clinic has a quality healthcare **TEAM** that includes nurse practitioners, an ambulatory care pharmacist, a physician, and nurses who work closely together to take care of your health and wellness needs.

### Services Include:

- Treat minor illnesses
- Provide health education & monitoring
- Check health progress between appointments
- Share information with your physician
- Monitor efficacy & safety of every medication
- Evaluate out of pocket medication expense
- Smoking cessation & weight loss services
- Diabetes education program
- Immunizations & injectable medications
- Develop a personalized medication plan
- Monitor control of chronic illnesses
- Medication check-ups
- Medication therapy management