

Shingles

What is Shingles?

- Herpes Zoster caused by **reactivation** of *varicella zoster virus (vzv)*
- The virus lies dormant in the nerve root and can be reactivated at *any* time in life.

How does it present?

Pre-eruptive

- fever, headache, malaise, myalgia.

Eruptive

- Painful erythematous rash with dermatomal distribution.
- If it crosses the midline – *it's not shingles*
- Rash develops into swollen plaques with clusters of small vesicles.
- Vesicles erupt, crust and fall off.
- Rash can take 2-3 weeks to disappear



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Management

- Analgesia
- Oral Acyclovir 800mg 5x daily for 7 days (up to 72 hours of onset of rash)

Prevention – National Shingles Immunisation Programme

- 1 Sept 2015 – offered routinely to anyone age 70 and 78
- Catch up offered to anyone aged 71, 72 or 79.

Complications

- Post Herpetic Neuralgia- persistent nerve pain in distribution of shingles after lesions have gone
- Vision Loss – **Ophthalmic Shingles** – reactivation of VZV in ophthalmic division of Trigeminal nerve.

The myths

'I'm worried about passing on shingles'

- It is not possible to catch shingles from someone else.
- You can pass on the VZV virus to anyone who isn't immune.
- Chickenpox *can* be caught from shingles, if the person has never been exposed to the virus.
- A person with shingles is infectious until all the lesions are dried.

Advise patients to avoid contact with pregnant women, young children and those with weak immune system.

'Only elderly people get shingles'

- Risk of developing shingles doubles every decade after 50
- However, *anyone* who has had chicken pox can develop shingles at any age.

'I've had the shingles vaccine/I've had shingles before, I can't develop shingles'

- Some people can develop shingles more than once
- The vaccine does not prevent you from getting shingles
- It reduces your risk of developing shingles
- If you develop shingles but have had the vaccine, symptoms are milder and duration of illness is shorter.

Advise patients who are eligible for vaccine but have had shingles in the past to have it.

References

[1] <http://www.healthline.com/health-slideshow/shingles-pictures#7>