

You are being provided with this fact sheet:

because you or your child may have been exposed to shingles. If you believe your child has developed chickenpox due to exposure to shingles, contact your health care provider. Notify your child care provider or preschool immediately if a diagnosis is made.

for informational purposes only.

What is shingles?

Shingles is a localized infection due to the same virus (varicella) that causes chickenpox. It occurs only in people who have had chickenpox in the past, or rarely in someone who has had the chickenpox vaccine. It is due to a reactivation of the chickenpox virus. It is not known why the virus reactivates in some individuals and not in others. Shingles can appear many years after a person has had chickenpox.

What causes shingles?

Shingles is caused by the chickenpox virus (varicella) that remains in the nerve roots of a person who had chickenpox. The virus can become active in your body again years later and result in shingles.

What are the symptoms of shingles?

The first symptom is often a tingling feeling on the skin, itchiness, or a stabbing pain. After several days, a rash appears in that same area, and will look as a stripe or patch of raised bumps on only one side of the body or face. It then develops into small, fluid-filled blisters that dry out and crust over within a few days. When the rash is at its peak, symptoms can range from mild itching to severe pain. The rash and pain usually disappear within three to five weeks.

How is shingles spread?

People with shingles may transmit the virus that causes both chickenpox and shingles to persons who have no immunity to chickenpox. Therefore, people who have not had chickenpox or who have *not* had the varicella (chickenpox) vaccine can catch chickenpox if they have close contact with the blisters of a person who has shingles. The virus is spread through direct contact with fluid from the rash blisters.

A person must have already had chickenpox in the past to develop shingles. Contact with a person with shingles does not cause another person's chickenpox virus to reactivate. You cannot catch shingles from someone who has shingles. An individual can get shingles from their own chickenpox virus, but not from someone else.

Who is at risk for shingles?

Anyone who has had chickenpox in the past can get shingles. The CDC estimates that roughly 1 out of every 3 people in the United States will develop shingles at some point in their life. Individuals who have impaired immune systems or who are on drugs that suppress the immune system (like steroids or chemotherapy) are considered to have the greatest risk of getting shingles. Unvaccinated pregnant women and infants are more likely to develop severe complications from the disease and should be protected from the virus.

-more-

Child Care Health Outreach Program

3020 Rucker Avenue, Suite 104 ■ Everett, WA 98201-3900 ■ www.snohd.org ■ tel: 425.252.5415

When and for how long is a person able to spread the chickenpox virus?

The virus is present at the site of the shingles rash and is contagious until the blisters become dry and crusted.

How is shingles treated?

Most cases of shingles resolve on their own without specific treatment. Physicians can prescribe medications for severe cases in individuals with weakened immune systems.

What can be done to prevent the spread of shingles?

Chickenpox must be prevented in order to prevent shingles. A vaccine for chickenpox (varicella vaccine) has been developed and may reduce the risk of developing shingles later in life. This vaccine is recommended for children 12 months and older and adults with no history or chickenpox illness. A shingles vaccine is available for persons age 60 and older.

To prevent spreading or getting chickenpox from someone infected with shingles:

- Avoid direct contact with infected blisters. Keep blisters covered. Wear gloves if direct hand contact to blisters is necessary.
- Dispose of bandages in a sealed plastic bag that have been in contact with the blisters.
- Disinfect surfaces that have been in contact with fluid from the blisters.
- Avoid sharing towels and personal items with a person who has shingles.
- Practice good handwashing.

Exclude from group setting?

Yes. Children can return when either all lesions have crusted OR if the rash can be covered, unless the child meets other exclusion criteria such as fever with behavior change.

References:

American Academy of Pediatrics

- Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools, 4th ed.

American Academy of Pediatrics

- Red Book: 2018-2021 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases, 31st ed.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (website)

- Shingles (Herpes Zoster). Accessed December 2020.

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

- Epidemiology and Prevention of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases, 13 ed.

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (website)

- Vaccines & Preventable Diseases. Accessed December 2020.

This document was printed from the Snohomish Health District's website by your child care or school. It is for information only and is not meant as a substitute for consultation with your health care provider. This document is not valid after 12/2021.