

Shingles

Dear Parent or Guardian,

You are being provided with this fact sheet:

- Because you or your child may have been exposed to shingles.
 - For informational purposes only.
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General Information About Shingles

What is shingles?

- Shingles is caused by the varicella zoster virus, the same virus that causes chickenpox.
- If a person had chickenpox earlier in their life, the virus can become active in their body again years later, causing shingles.

Who can get it?

- Anyone who has had chickenpox in the past can get shingles.
- Shingles is primarily seen in people who are older than 50 years.
- **You cannot get shingles from someone who has shingles.** However, people who have not had chickenpox or who have not had the varicella (chickenpox) vaccine **can get chickenpox** from a person with shingles.
- Anyone who has not had chickenpox or who has not had the varicella (chickenpox) vaccine series should contact their healthcare provider if they have been exposed to shingles or think they have chickenpox.

What are the symptoms?

- The first symptom is often a tingling feeling on the skin, itchiness, or a stabbing pain.
- After several days, a rash appears as a stripe or patch of raised bumps, typically on one side of the body or face.
- The bumps develop into small, fluid-filled blisters that dry out and become crusty within a few days.
- The rash can cause a range of symptoms, from mild itching to severe pain, and can last up to three to five weeks.

How is it spread?

- A person can only get shingles from their own chickenpox virus, not from someone else.
- The virus can easily spread to people who either haven't had chickenpox or haven't had the full series of the varicella (chickenpox) vaccine.
- The virus is found in the fluid of the blisters of a person who has shingles.
- It spreads:
 - By touching an object or surface that has the virus on it and then touching the mouth, eyes, or nose.
 - When a person breathes small particles of the virus that come from the blisters, before the blisters have dried out and formed scabs.

- People with shingles cannot spread the virus before the blisters appear or after the rash has dried and formed scabs.

What Do I Need to Know Following This Exposure?

Your child cannot get shingles from this exposure, but there is a chance they can get chickenpox if they do not have immunity. Immunity means they have already had chickenpox or they have received both doses of the varicella [chickenpox] vaccine.

- **If your child has immunity to chickenpox**, they are largely protected from getting chickenpox from this exposure.
- If your child does not have immunity to chickenpox:
 - Notify your child's healthcare provider. The varicella (chickenpox) vaccine may be given within 3 to 5 days after an exposure to help prevent chickenpox or make it less severe.
 - Watch for chickenpox symptoms (fever; rash on the back, chest, or face; low activity; lack of appetite) for up to 21 days after exposure.
 - Notify the child care program if any of the above symptoms develop.

Vaccination is the best way to prevent both chickenpox and shingles.

- A vaccine for varicella (chickenpox) is recommended for children 12 months and older and adults who never had chickenpox.
- The varicella (chickenpox) vaccine may reduce the risk of developing shingles later in life.
- A shingles vaccine is available for people older than 50 years.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about either or both of these vaccines for your family members.

If you have additional questions or concerns contact your healthcare provider. This fact sheet provides general information only.

Does My Child Need to Stay Home from Child Care?

If your child has been **EXPOSED** to shingles, they do not need to stay home from child care unless they develop chickenpox symptoms.

If your child develops chickenpox symptoms, they need to stay home. Notify the child care program immediately.

Please follow your child care program's sickness policy.

References

American Academy of Pediatrics

- Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools, 6th Edition. Pages 81-82

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

- Varicella (Chickenpox) website: <https://www.cdc.gov/chickenpox/index.html>
- Shingles (Herpes Zoster) website: <https://www.cdc.gov/shingles/index.html>