

There are also ways to help relieve the pain and symptoms of discomfort:

- Nerve blocking pain medication (Neurontin)
- Antidepressants
- Numbing agents (Lidocaine creams/gels)
- Narcotics (Codein)
- Cool compresses
- Calamine lotion
- Colloidal oatmeal baths



Recovery

1-2 weeks after the blisters erupt, the oozing sores will begin to crust over. The sores will usually disappear after 2 weeks.

The pain will decrease over the following week but some individuals can experience pain for months or years.

This condition is called **Postherpetic Neuralgia** and it can occur in up to half of those infected. However it can be treated with the same medications as the original shingles virus.

Prevention

Zostavax® is the vaccine for shingles. It's recommended for people 60 years of age and older. It has proven to reduce the risk of getting shingles by 51% and the risk of postherpetic neuralgia by 67%.

The vaccine may not be for you if:

- You've ever had a severe allergic reaction to gelatin, the antibiotic neomycin
- Have a weakened immune system because of HIV/AIDS, or another disease that affects the immune system or are being treated with medications that affect the immune system, such as steroids, radiation or chemotherapy
- Are being treated for cancer affecting the bone marrow or lymphatic system, such as leukemia or lymphoma
- You are or may be pregnant

Common side effects after receiving the vaccine are redness, soreness, swelling or itching at the injection site, and headache.

The vaccine is available nearby at Walgreens located on 33E 23rd street, or you can speak to your primary care provider for more information.



Shingles

Herpes Zoster

A wellness and prevention guide for the members of the Stein Senior Center

Developed by the Nurses at CUNY New Y

College of Technology

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What is Shingles?

Shingles, also known as *herpes zoster*, is a virus caused by the reactivation of the virus that causes chicken pox (*varicella zoster*). It appears as a painful blistering skin rash in a clustered or banded formation.

Signs and Symptoms



The first symptoms to appear with shingles is often feelings of:

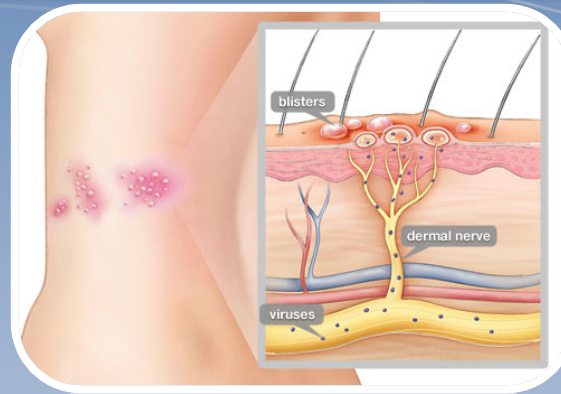
- Burning
- Shooting pain
- Itching
- Sensitivity in one area of the body

Some people report feeling feverish or weak.

Two to three days later, a pimple-like rash develops along a nerve path in the body, usually in the upper torso and sometimes the face.

Blisters will develop and can last for several weeks.

Once the blisters crust over (a sign of healing) the pain begins to lessen.



Who's at risk?

The risk factors for contracting shingles are:

- Age 50 or older
- Recent surgery (including organ transplant or injury repair)
- Medication that suppresses the immune system (chemotherapy, steroids)
- Radiation therapy
- Serious illness such as cancer, Lupus or HIV/AIDS
- Poor Nutrition
- Stress

How does it spread?

It is not easy to spread Shingles from one person to another.

Shingles itself is not contagious, however if an individual has never been exposed to chicken pox (*varicella zoster*) they are at risk of contracting that virus.

A person is only contagious during the blister phase and there must be contact with the fluid from the blisters.

Treatment Options

Currently, there is no cure for the shingles virus. However, there are prescription medications that help shorten the length and severity of the illness. To be effective, they must be started as soon as possible once symptoms appear.

These medications include:

- Acyclovir (Zovirax)
- Valacyclovir (Valtrex)
- Famciclovir (Famvir)

