

Emergency Department Shingles (Herpes Zoster)

General Information

Shingles, also known as herpes zoster, is a reactivation infection caused by the chicken pox virus. It causes a painful rash. You have had chicken pox sometime in your life to get Shingles. The virus that causes the rash hides in your body for years after you have chicken pox. Later in life, usually after 50 years of age, the virus may awaken, causing shingles.

It is not possible to catch shingles from someone who has the rash, but it is possible to catch the virus and then get sick with chicken pox. You probably will not catch the virus if you have had chicken pox or shingles in the past. Shingles is contagious until the rash has scabbed over.

Instructions

- The doctor may prescribe you anti-viral medication, take them as directed.
- You may take acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil) for pain.
- Keep the parts of your skin that have a rash clean and dry. Do not use creams or gels, unless prescribed by your doctor.

Return to Emergency if any of the Following Develop:

- You become confused.
- You get a stiff neck.

See your Family Doctor if any of the Following Develop:

- If you get hearing loss.
- If the blisters look infected (red, swollen, yellow milky drainage or pus).
- Blisters are close to the eyes.
- You have pain in the eyes.

For more information or questions contact HealthLinkBC at 811.

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