

What is shingles?

- A rash caused by the dormant (sleeping) chickenpox virus. After a chickenpox infection, the virus does not leave the body, but hides along nerve pathways of the skin. Shingles is the rash that occurs on the area of skin where the virus lays. It can occur at any age but is most common in people over the age of 50. There is a vaccine for shingles.

What are symptoms that could occur?

- Chills, fever, upset stomach and fatigue may occur 3-4 days before the rash
- The rash occurs in chickenpox-like crops, most often on the chest and waist (but can occur anywhere on the body)
- 1 – 2 days later the rash becomes fluid-filled blisters which dry and scab around the 5th day
- There is often deep, severe pain in the rash area due to the inflammation of the nerves

How is it spread?

- The fluid in the blisters contains the virus. Coming in contact with this fluid can cause **chickenpox** in 10 – 21 days for those not immune.
- Once the blisters have scabbed, chickenpox can no longer be able to spread

How is it diagnosed and treated?

- Primary care provider evaluation
- Anti-viral medications and pain relieving medications may be prescribed

Are there complications?

- Pain at the site of the healed rash has been known to persist for months or years
- Scarring can occur
- People who have immunity problems may have repeated cases of shingles, otherwise it is rare to have recurrence
- If shingles affects the eye, it can lead to temporary or permanent blindness

Should the sick individual be isolated?

- Shingles can cause chickenpox in others who have not had the varicella vaccine, therefore should be isolated from those persons
- Should also be isolated from non-immune pregnant women for the same reason

When can the individual return to the general population?

- When lesions are dry and crusted, at least 1 week after first eruption

Should facilities do special cleaning?

- Special cleaning is not necessary. Routine cleaning with EPA approved products is recommended

If I have any other questions, whom can I contact?

- Call the Genesee County Health Department at 257-1017