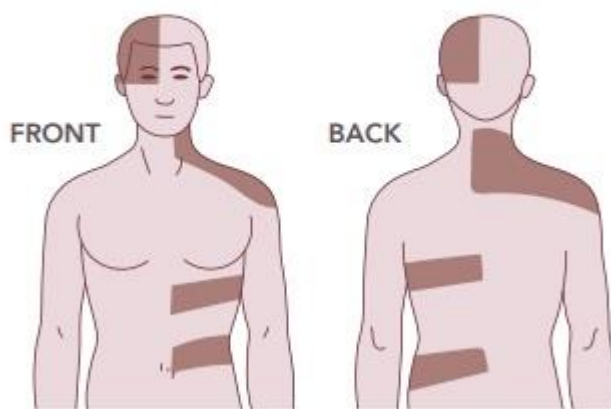


Shingles is caused by the varicella-zoster virus, which is the same virus that causes chickenpox. When a person recovers from chickenpox, the virus stays dormant (inactive) in their body and can reactivate later in life, causing shingles.

If you come into direct contact with the shingles rash blisters and have never had chickenpox, you could contract the virus, resulting in chickenpox, not shingles. Shingles patients are contagious until their blisters scab is over and should avoid contact with newborns, pregnant women, and those with weakened immune systems, as chickenpox can pose serious risks to these groups.

COMMON SITES OF SHINGLES:



What are the symptoms of shingles? Typically, the virus affects only one side of the body, however, it can also appear around one eye, on one side of the neck, or on the face. Shingles symptoms may include:

- Highly sensitive skin
- Itching
- Pain, burning, tingling, or numbness of the skin
- A red rash that emerges a few days after initial symptoms
- Fluid-filled blisters that burst and eventually crust over

Some individuals may also experience:

- Light sensitivity
- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Fever

In cases of severe pain, shingles may be mistaken for other conditions, and occasionally, individuals experience pain without a visible rash. Thus, it is crucial to obtain a proper diagnosis promptly.

How is shingles diagnosed? Usually, a doctor can identify shingles based on the characteristic rash present on one side of the body. Diagnostic tests are generally not necessary, but in some instances, cells from a blister may be tested, or a herpes test may be conducted if needed.

What are the treatment options for shingles?

- Anti-Viral medicines
- Pain medication – paracetamol, codeine combinations or anti-inflammatories
- Ointments to relieve the pain

To address discomfort, individuals are advised to:

- Wear loose, cotton clothing to minimize irritation of the affected skin.
- Apply cooling methods such as wet dressings, cool baths, or ice packs in a plastic bag to the affected area.
- Protect the rash with non-stick dressings.
- Moisturize itchy skin with fragrance-free creams.

Anti-viral medications can help curb the multiplication of the shingles virus, potentially reducing the severity of symptoms. It's crucial to initiate antiviral treatment within 72 hours of the rash's appearance. In some cases, nerve pain medications like antidepressants or anticonvulsants may be prescribed.

Can shingles be prevented? The primary prevention method is vaccination against chickenpox. In South Africa, this vaccine is administered as part of the national vaccination schedule. However, the vaccine, when given in adulthood, may also lessen the severity of shingles. Therefore, it is recommended for individuals aged 60 and older.

Immunizations are available at your Doctor, Clicks or Dischem

Getting vaccinated if you are unwell.

If you have high temperature or feel too unwell to do your normal activities, wait until you're feeling better before having the vaccine

This is an education information brochure only and should not be used for diagnosis