

## **HERPES ZOSTER**

**Definition:** Shingles is caused by the varicella zoster virus, the same virus that causes chickenpox. After a person recovers from chickenpox, the virus stays in the body in a dormant (inactive) state. For reasons that are not fully known, the virus can reactivate years later, causing shingles.

**Transmission:** Shingles cannot be passed from one person to another. However, the virus that causes shingles, the varicella zoster virus, can be spread from a person with active shingles to a person who has never had chickenpox. In such cases, the person exposed to the virus might develop chickenpox, but they would not develop shingles. The virus is spread through direct contact with fluid from the rash blisters, not through sneezing, coughing or casual contact.

**Symptoms:** Shingles usually starts as a painful rash on one side of the face or body. The rash forms blisters that typically scab over in 7–10 days and clears up within 2–4 weeks. Before the rash develops, there is often pain, itching, or tingling in the area where the rash will develop. Other symptoms of shingles can include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Chills
- Upset stomach

**Exposure:** Direct contact with fluid from the blisters of an infected person.

**Precautions and PPE considerations:** The use of gloves is necessary. Also consider eye protection and a gown if the patient has weeping blisters.

### **Treatments:**

- Keep the rash covered.
- Do not touch or scratch the rash.
- [Wash your hands often](#) to prevent the spread of varicella zoster virus.
- Until your rash has developed crusts, avoid contact with
- pregnant women who have never had chickenpox or the varicella vaccine;
- premature or low birth weight infants; and immunocompromised persons (such as persons receiving immunosuppressive medications or undergoing chemotherapy, organ transplant recipients, and people with HIV infection).

**Work Guidelines:** Personnel with localized lesions should cover them and not take care of high risk patients. Compromised personnel shall be excluded from duty until

lesions dry and crust. Also they shall be excluded from duty unless they get the second dose of the vaccine within 3-5 days of exposure.