

# Shingles (Zoster)

## Definition

- Shingles is a rash that looks like a stripe or band
- It's only on one side of the body
- It's caused by the chickenpox virus
- The medical name is Herpes Zoster

## Health Information

### Symptoms

- Rash is in a stripe or band. It follows the path of a nerve
- Occurs on only one side of the body
- Starts with clusters of red bumps and changes to water blisters. It finally becomes dry crusts. It looks like small groups of chickenpox sores.
- Is most commonly found on the back, chest, or abdomen
- Usually doesn't burn or itch in children (as it does for adults)
- Your child will not have a fever or feel sick.
- Shingles rarely occurs before 3 years old

### Cause

- Shingles (zoster) is caused by the chickenpox virus (varicella virus).
- In some people the chickenpox virus stays inactive (dormant) in their bodies. For unknown reasons, the virus can re-appear as shingles, not as chickenpox.
- Your child can only get shingles if he or she has already had chickenpox.
- Shingles can also happen in children who had the chickenpox vaccine. These cases of shingles are mild compared to regular shingles.
- The disease is NOT caught from other people who have shingles or chickenpox.

### Prevention

- The chickenpox vaccine decreases the shingles rate by 40%.

## Care Advice

### 1. Overview:

- Most children with shingles have the rash, but no other symptoms.
- Sometimes the rash itches. Rarely it's a little painful.
- The main problem is that the rash contains the chickenpox virus.
- Your job is to protect other people from getting chickenpox.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

### 2. Calamine Lotion for Itching:

- Zoster usually doesn't need any cream or lotion.
- If itching occurs, use calamine lotion (no prescription needed). Put it on the spots that itch the most. Do this 3 times per day, as needed.
- You can also rub an ice cube on the itchy spots for 10 minutes.

3. **Benadryl Medicine for Itching:**
  - If itching becomes severe or interferes with sleep, give Benadryl by mouth.
4. **Try Not to Scratch:**
  - Try not to let your child pick and scratch at the sores. This can lead to infected sores.
  - Trim fingernails.
  - Wash hands often with soap.
5. **Pain Medicine:**
  - To help with any pain, give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen. Use as needed.
  - Never give aspirin to children. Reason: possible link of aspirin with Reye's syndrome.
6. **What to Expect:**
  - The red bumps and blisters in the stripe get worse for several days.
  - The rash dries up by 7 to 10 days.
  - About 20% of adults with shingles have chronic nerve pain after the rash is gone. The pain can last for 6 months or longer. Children do not get this complication.
7. **Return to School:**
  - The shingles sores contain the chickenpox virus. So children with shingles can transmit chickenpox (but not shingles) to others. Spread occurs by touching the rash.
  - Prevention of spread: Cover the shingles rash.
  - Children can go to school if the rash can be kept covered by clothing.
  - If it can't be covered (such as on the face), children need to stay home until it crusts over. That takes 7 days on average.
  - Avoid contact with anyone who has never had the chickenpox disease or vaccine. Also avoid contact with anyone who has a weak immune system.

## Call Your Doctor If

- The rash becomes very painful or very itchy
- The rash lasts more than 14 days
- The rash looks infected (pus or soft yellow scabs)
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

### Pediatric Care Advice

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