

## HAND HYGIENE

### WHAT CAN I DO IF I HAVE SHINGLES?

- Antiviral medications are available that reduce the symptoms, severity, and duration of the infection. You should discuss this with your physician.
- If you are bothered by pain tell your physician who may prescribe pain medication.
- Take medication as directed.
- Avoid perfumed soaps.
- Keep the rash clean and dry.
- Rest, drink fluids, and eat well.
- Do not touch or scratch the rash. Scratching can cause infection, delay healing, and leave scars.
- Keep blisters covered where possible.
- Always remember to wash your hands if you touch the blisters.

**HAND HYGIENE  
THE BEST  
WAY TO PREVENT  
INFECTION**

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Special care must be paid to hand hygiene as it is the best way to prevent the spread of germs.

### GOOD HAND HYGIENE INCLUDES:

#### Alcohol-Based Hand Rub

1. Apply to palm of one hand.
2. Rub hands together, covering all of hands and fingers.
3. Rub until hands feel dry.

#### Hand Washing

1. Remove all jewelry.
2. Use warm running water and soap.
3. Spend at least **15-30** seconds lathering and washing hands.
4. Rub hands together, paying attention to finger tips, between the fingers, and thumbs.
5. Rinse thoroughly.
6. Dry with paper towel and turn off tap with paper towel.
7. Dispose of paper towel in the garbage.

**IT'S OK TO ASK NURSES, DOCTORS, AND  
OTHER HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS IF  
THEY HAVE CLEANED THEIR HANDS.**

**ASK VISITORS IF THEY HAVE WASHED  
THEIR HANDS.**

## SHINGLES (HERPES ZOSTER)

*Information for Clients,  
Residents, Families and  
Visitors*

INFECTION PREVENTION  
& CONTROL PROGRAM  
[www.easternhealth.ca](http://www.easternhealth.ca)



## **WHAT ARE SHINGLES?**

- Shingles is a painful disease caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox (*varicella zoster*).
- After the symptoms of chickenpox disappear, the virus stays in the body where it remains inactive.
- When the virus reactivates it is called shingles. The virus tends to reactivate when an individual's immune system is weakened due to illness or age.

## **WHO CAN GET SHINGLES?**

- Approximately 90% of Canadians have had chickenpox and are at risk of shingles.
- You have a greater risk of getting shingles if you are older than 50 or have a weak immune system.
- Most individuals only have shingles once in a lifetime, but it is possible to have it again.
- You can not get shingles from having contact with shingles.

## **HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF AGAINST SHINGLES?**

- The shingles vaccine is the best protection against the virus.
- Adults over 60 years of age should get the vaccine. Some people age 50-60 may benefit from the vaccine. Ask your physician if the vaccine is right for you.
- If you are immune compromised or receive cancer treatment, check with your specialist before getting vaccinated.

## **HOW IS THE VIRUS SPREAD?**

- The virus is present in the fluid of the shingles blisters. It is spread through direct contact with these blisters. It can cause chickenpox, but not shingles, in someone who has never had chickenpox or the chickenpox vaccine.
- Covering shingles blisters with a dressing can help prevent the spread of the virus to other people.

## **WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF SHINGLES?**

- You may feel itching, tingling, burning or pain in a specific area.
- After 2-3 days, blisters will appear, usually on one side of the body or face.
- New blisters will appear for about a week.
- The blisters will dry out and crust over in 2-4 weeks.
- When the rash is at its peak, symptoms will range from mild itching to severe pain. For most people the pain lessens as the rash heals.

## **CAN SHINGLES CAUSE COMPLICATIONS?**

- The most common complication is persistent pain which can last for weeks to months.
- The chances of having this prolonged pain increases with age.
- If you have shingles near your eye, it is important to see your physician.

## **WHAT TO EXPECT WHILE IN HOSPITAL**

Special precautions will be taken while you are infectious.

- A sign may be posted.
- You may need to stay in your room.
- Keep the blisters covered until they are dry and crusted.
- Staff may wear gown, gloves, or a mask when providing direct care.
- All staff and visitors must clean their hands when they enter and leave your room.
- Visitors should be limited to people who have had chickenpox, the chickenpox vaccine, or shingles vaccine.