

SHINGLES

<http://www.aftershingles.com/faq.html>
(Material assembled by Charles Maack)

Disclaimer: Please recognize that I am not a Medical Doctor. I have been an avid student researching and studying prostate cancer as a survivor and continuing patient since 1992. I have dedicated my retirement years to continued research and study in order to serve as an advocate for prostate cancer awareness, and, from a activist patient's viewpoint, to help patients, caregivers, and others interested develop an understanding of prostate cancer, its treatment options, and the treatment of the side effects that often accompany treatment. Readers of this paper must understand that the comments or recommendations I make are not intended to be the procedure to blindly follow; rather, they are to be reviewed as merely trying to address an issue that befell a patient friend. The information should be used for further personal research, study, and subsequent discussion with the medical professional/physician providing shingles care. Here is a paper regarding shingles facts:

Shingles are always only on one side and not both sides.

<http://www.shinglesinfo.com/shinglesinfo/are-you-at-risk/shingles-facts.jsp>

Shingles is caused by a virus called varicella zoster. This is the same virus that causes chicken pox. It is a herpes virus. Shingles is also called herpes zoster. Some of the virus that causes chicken pox stays in the body. It remains inactive in the [nerve](#) cells near the spine for many years. Then it suddenly becomes active, causing shingles. This virus most often occurs in adults older than 60 years of age as the result of contracting chicken pox in the past. However, it should be noted that many persons in this age category could have had such a light dose of chicken pox in the past that they didn't even know it. Many in our children's generation had the vaccination as children and they, too, could still have had a light dose of chicken pox without knowing. With possibly being the case they, too, may also experience age related reactivation of herpes zoster - Shingles.

PREVENTIVE:

A preventive vaccine recently manufactured by Merck Pharmaceuticals and approved by the FDA only for adults 60 years of age and older is Zostavax. There is some concern about its use by patients whose immune systems may have been compromised (weakened) by ailments or treatment for those ailments (prostate cancer, of course, being one of them). If it is determined that an individual's health permits receiving this vaccination, he/she should give serious consideration to protecting against the very negative aspects of Shingles. Learn more about Zostavax:

<http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2006/NEW01378.html> (then search for "Shingles," and <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zostavax>

IMPORTANT TO BE AWARE: According to this report <http://tinyurl.com/bazvs8h> – if still accessible – it is important to be aware that if experiencing depression, the effects of the shingles vaccine Zostavax may be compromised by this health condition. After receiving the vaccine, patients with major depressive disorder who were not receiving antidepressants had lower cell-mediated immunity to VZV (varicella zoster vaccine) than both healthy individuals and depressed individuals who were receiving drug treatment, mostly with selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors ($P < 0.01$ for both). After receipt of the vaccine, in fact, the healthy controls and the treated depressed individuals had 69.7% and 288.1% increases, respectively, in cell-mediated immunity, but there was no significant change in the untreated depressed individuals. The message? Insure depression is being treated in order for Zostavax to be effective.

SIGNS OF POSSIBLE SHINGLES ONSET:

- Unusual itching, tingling, burning pain that doesn't seem to subside and develops into a rash. Usually noticed in the chest, abdomen, and back area, but can appear on the face near the eyes.
- Small fluid filled blisters appearing

IMPORTANT: GET TO YOUR FAMILY PHYSICIAN AND GET PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS STARTED WITHIN 48 HOURS OF ERUPTING FOR BEST RESULTS!

SHINGLES ALREADY ERUPTED:

Medications to provide relief include:

- Bacitracin cream (read this somewhere...discuss with physician if used for shingles relief)

- Acyclovir (Zovirax), a prescribed med to be taken 5 times per day
(or)

- Famciclovir (Famvir), a prescribed med to be taken 3 times per day - read: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/medmaster/a694038.html>
(you can also enter the above Acyclovir in the search box of the foregoing website)

(or)

- Valacyclovir (Valtrax), a prescribed med to be taken 3 times per day - read: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/medmaster/a695010.html>

NOTE: None of the three foregoing are to be taken simultaneously.

I would expect your treating physician to be aware of these medications.

- Pain killers (over the counter unlikely strong enough...will need prescription strength). For extreme pain of shingles, read where a patient was in the hospital with painful shingles and was given a narcotic Dilaudid (hydromorphone). He claimed that it was an amazing pain killer that was like a bloodhound seeming to sniff out the pain and go directly to it and work almost immediately. He continued on this medication for five days. Read of another patient, in regards to relieving advanced cancer pain, prescribed a Dilaudid patch and a pump with a 1mg/hr rate and a 0.5mg 15 minute bolus. He could press a button every 15 minutes as needed for pain. Please note that this drug is likely for the treatment of extreme pain not otherwise brought under reasonable control by other drugs.

- Zostrix cream which contains 0.025% Capsaicin is often recommended - visit this URL and read the fact sheet:

<http://www.itpharmacy.com/itpharmacy/zostrix/index.html>)

- Gabapentin to relieve the pain of postherpetic neuralgia (PHN; the burning, stabbing pain or aches that may last for months or years after an attack of shingles). Gabapentin is in a class of medications called anticonvulsants.

Gabapentin relieves the pain of PHN by changing the way the body senses pain. (Dosage prescribed to friend was 300mg tablets three times daily) - read:

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/medmaster/a694007.html>

(There are several others. Your physician should know them and you can do a Google search using the word "Shingles" to find them)

- Cold compresses on blisters (really need to load up on large 9X12 ice packs since they will be used regularly, day and night, wrapped in toweling and gently placed on every area of discomfort)

- Very loose clothes that are less likely to rub the area.

- COMFORT: You may find most comfort by resting and sleeping on a recliner.

FOR MORE INFO: Visit www.shinglesinfo.com