

Useful websites

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SHINGLES (HERPES ZOSTER)

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

This information was correct at the time of printing. While the Trust makes every reasonable effort to keep its information leaflets up to date, very recent changes may not yet be reflected in the guidance and you should discuss this with the clinical staff at the time of your appointment.

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Infection Prevention and Control Department

Sunderland Royal Hospital

What is Shingles (Herpes Zoster)?

Shingles is a localised reactivation of the virus that causes Chicken Pox. An infection of Chicken Pox as a child, which may have even gone undiagnosed, causes the virus to lie dormant in the nerve roots for many years. At some stage in life the virus may become reactivated manifesting itself as Shingles.

What are the Symptoms?

Lesions may appear in crops, in irregular fashion, along nerve pathways. Severe pain and partial numbness are common especially in elderly patients.

How is Shingles Spread?

The virus may be transmitted by coming into contact with vesicle fluid or indirectly through articles freshly soiled by discharges from vesicles and mucous membranes of infected people.

You remain infectious for a week after the appearance of the vesicles or until the lesions have stopped discharging.

What happens on admission to hospital?

On admission to hospital you may be admitted to a side-room in order to prevent the spread of infection. This is because people who have not previously had Chicken Pox, who come into contact with someone with Shingles, may proceed to develop Chicken Pox.

Will my visitors be at risk?

Visitors who have **not** had Chicken Pox before, especially those who are in the first and last three months of pregnancy should avoid contact with the infected person.

How is Shingles treated?

Medication may be prescribed to relieve your symptoms. The main treatment usually required is to keep the lesions clean and dry to prevent secondary infection.

At home articles soiled by discharges from the vesicles should be washed thoroughly in a domestic washing machine, preferably on a hot cycle unless this will damage the materials concerned.