



## SHINGLES (HERPES ZOSTER) FACT SHEET

### WHAT IS SHINGLES?

- Shingles, also called herpes zoster, is a painful rash disease. Shingles can lead to severe nerve pain called postherpetic neuralgia (PHN) that can last for months or years after the rash goes away.
- Almost 1 out of 3 people in the United States will develop shingles in their lifetime.
- You can get shingles at any age, but it's more common in older adults. Your risk of getting shingles and having more severe pain increases as you get older.

### HOW DO YOU GET SHINGLES?

- If you've ever had chickenpox, you can get shingles.
- Shingles cannot be passed from one person to another. However, the varicella zoster virus, can spread from a person with active shingles to cause chickenpox in someone who had never had chickenpox or received chickenpox vaccine.
- The virus is spread through direct contact with fluid from the rash blisters. Once the rash has developed crusts, the person is no longer contagious.

### SYMPTOMS

Shingles is a painful rash that develops on one side of the face or body. The rash consists of blisters that typically scab over in 7 to 10 days. The rash usually clears up within 2 to 4 weeks. About 1 to 5 days before the rash develops, people often have pain, itching, or tingling in the area where the rash will develop. Shingles can affect the eye and cause loss of vision. Other symptoms may include fever, headache, chills, and upset stomach.

### TREATMENT

Several antiviral medicines are available to treat shingles and shorten the length and severity of illness. Discuss treatment options with your doctor.

### PREVENTION

The shingles vaccine is recommended for people ages 50 and older to protect against shingles and the long-term pain that it can cause. The Delaware General Health District (DGHD) offers the shingles vaccine. Please call (740) 203-2040 to schedule an appointment.

If you have shingles, you should:

- Cover the rash.
- Avoid touching or scratching the rash.
- Wash your hands often to prevent the spread of varicella zoster virus.
- Avoid contact with the following people below until your rash has developed crusts:
  - pregnant women who have never had chickenpox or the chickenpox vaccine;
  - premature or low birth weight infants; and
  - people with weakened immune systems