

TANK TIMES

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SHINGLES - A PAINFUL VIRAL INFECTION

Shingles (herpes zoster) is the same virus that causes chickenpox. If you had chickenpox earlier in life, the virus has remained in your nerve tissue lying dormant. Sometimes, the virus can reappear in the form of shingles. Generally, this occurs when your immune system has been compromised in one way or another. It could be because of a disease you have developed, certain medications you have taken, stress, injury, or advanced age.

You may first notice symptoms such as severe headache, swollen lymph glands, flu-like symptoms, or sensitivity to light. Then, a few days later, you may notice a rash on the left or right side of your body that is itchy and painful. This area of bumps generally starts out in a small band or strip, later turns into blisters, and takes a few weeks to disappear.

The biggest problem with the development of shingles is that the pain may not go away when the other symptoms subside. This condition is called postherpetic neuralgia (PHN), and results from the shingles virus damaging the nerves of the skin. In the U.S., of the approximately 500,000 people that get shingles, 20%-30% will have pain for months, years, or even the rest of their lives.

The pain can be treated with certain medications, but to prevent or lessen the effects of shingles, there is a vaccine available for people ages 60 and older.

Talk to your doctor to see if the shingles vaccination is right for you.

Resource: Mayo Clinic



Quote:

"How much pain have cost us the evils that have never happened."

Thomas Jefferson

For more information, call the HealthChoice H.E.L.P. line at 1-800-318-BEOK

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HAND WASHING 101

Hand washing is one of the easiest and most effective ways of protecting yourself from germs and infections. You pick up germs from other people, animals, and contaminated surfaces, then infect yourself by touching your nose, mouth, or eyes.

Experts say cold and flu viruses are spread by hands more often than through the air from sneezing. Even more serious diseases such as hepatitis A, meningitis, and infectious diarrhea can be prevented by making a habit of washing your hands.

How should you wash your hands?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend the following tips for hand washing:

- * Wet your hands and apply soap. Use warm water if it's available.
- * Rub your hands vigorously to make lather and scrub all surfaces. Continue to rub your hands for approximately 20 seconds.
- * Rinse hands well under running water.
- * Dry your hands using a paper towel or air dryer. When possible, use your paper towel to turn off the faucet.

When soap and water aren't readily available, use an alcohol-based product to clean your hands. Alcohol-based hand rubs significantly reduce the number of germs on skin and are fast acting. When using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer:

- * Apply the product to the palm of one hand.
- * Rub your hands together.
- * Rub the product over all surfaces of hands and fingers until your hands are dry.

Hand washing doesn't take much time or effort, but it offers great rewards in terms of preventing illness. Adopting this simple habit can play a major role in protecting your health!

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



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