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Shingles

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)

Source

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS). [Shingles Information Page](#).

Shingles (herpes zoster) is an outbreak of rash or blisters on the skin that is caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox — the varicella-zoster virus. The first sign of shingles is often burning or tingling pain (which can be severe), or sometimes numbness or itch, generally on one side of the body. After several days or a week, a rash of fluid-filled blisters, similar to chickenpox, appears in one area on one side of the body. Shingles pain can be mild or intense. Some people have mostly itching; some feel pain from the gentlest touch or breeze. The most common location for shingles is a band, called a dermatome, spanning one side of the trunk around the waistline. Anyone who has had chickenpox is at risk for shingles. Scientists think that some of the virus particles from the original exposure to the varicella-zoster virus, leave the skin blisters and move into the nervous system. When the varicella-zoster virus reactivates, the virus moves back down the long nerve fibers that extend from the sensory cell bodies to the skin. The viruses multiply, the tell-tale rash erupts, and the person now has shingles.