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## **SHINGLES....AVOID THE PAIN, GET VACCINATED**

Almost one in three people in the United States will develop shingles during their lifetime. This painful illness is a possibility for anyone who suffered with chickenpox and is more likely to occur if you are stressed or older.

The good news is you can protect yourself against shingles. Talk with your doctor about the shingles vaccine. Most insurance companies cover the shingles vaccines for members age 60 or older as a one-time vaccination based on Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommendations.

Shingles, also known as herpes zoster, is caused by the varicella zoster virus (VZV). This is the same virus that causes chickenpox. The painful, blistering skin rash from shingles can last two to four weeks.

If you have had chickenpox in the past, then VZV is inside you. It never leaves your body and stays in a dormant state. For reasons that are not fully known, the virus can reactivate years later and cause shingles.

Some people may develop severe nerve pain that can last for months or even years after the rash goes away. This is called post herpetic neuralgia (PHN). Older adults are more likely to get PHN. Shingles can lead to other serious complications, including eye problems.

Pain from shingles has been described as excruciating, aching, burning, stabbing, and shock-like. It has been compared to the pain of childbirth or kidney stones. The pain from shingles can cause depression, anxiety, difficulty concentrating, loss of appetite and weight loss. Shingles can interfere with activities of daily living like dressing, bathing, eating, cooking, shopping, and travel.

The only way to reduce your risk of developing shingles and PHN is to get vaccinated. Some people should wait to get vaccinated, or they should not get vaccinated at all if they have a weakened immune system. Shingles vaccine is available in pharmacies and doctor's offices. Talk with your doctor if you have any questions about the shingles vaccine.