

Louisiana Pharmacists Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Louisiana Pharmacists Association Educates Patients about Shingles

Shingles is a painful rash that affects 1 in 3 adults in their lifetimes. Shingles is caused by the varicella-zoster virus, also known as the chickenpox virus.ⁱ After a case of chickenpox heals, the virus lives on, dormant, in nerve cells.ⁱⁱ The virus becomes reactivated later in life, travels the nerve to the skin surface, and causes the painful rash.ⁱⁱⁱ It is possible to get shingles at any age, but adults over 50 are much more likely to get it, with 50% of cases occurring after 60. People taking immune suppressing drugs at any age make up many of the cases before age 50.

Most individuals experience one shingles episode in their lifetime, but up to three episodes are possible.ⁱ Shingles typically affects one side of the body at a time, and is most often on the torso or face. A few days before the rash a person may experience pain, itching or tingling. These sensations are followed by the formation of blisters which may take 10 days to scab over. Fever, headache, chills, and upset stomach are also reported. An episode can take 4 weeks to resolve.^{iv}

Once the rash appears rapid treatment with drugs like valacyclovir or famciclovir may hasten recovery.ⁱⁱⁱ Early treatment is believed to reduce the risk of developing long-term pain called post-herpetic neuralgia. Post-herpetic neuralgia is difficult to treat and is associated with long term disability in a small number of people.ⁱ

An individual with shingles cannot transmit shingles to another individual. However, an individual with blisters that have not scabbed over can give chickenpox to someone who has never had chickenpox or been vaccinated against it. Patients with active shingles should take care not to come in contact with pregnant women, infants, transplant recipients, people undergoing chemotherapy, and people with HIV.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend infants receive the varicella vaccine between 12-15 months of age to prevent chickenpox.^v The shingles vaccine, Zostavax® is FDA approved for individuals over the age of 50, and many insurance plans will cover the

vaccine in patients over that age. The CDC recommends that anyone over the age of 60 receive the vaccine.ⁱ In Louisiana, individuals over the age of 60 do not need a prescription to receive the vaccine at a pharmacy.^{vi} There is evidence that the vaccine declines in effectiveness after 5 years so a booster may be needed.^{vii}

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The Louisiana Pharmacists Association, established in 1882, strives to promote the interests of all pharmacists of the State of Louisiana. For more information about the LPA and its benefits, contact Julie Fuselier or Phyllis Perron, LPA Co-Executive Directors at 225/346-6883 or visit our website at www.louisianapharmacists.com.

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ⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Shingles (Herpes Zoster). <http://www.cdc.gov/shingles/index.html> (1 May 2014).

ⁱⁱ Pergam, SA, AP Limaye, and the AST Infectious Diseases Community of Practice. "Varicella Zoster Virus (VZV)." *American journal of transplantation : official journal of the American Society of Transplantation and the American Society of Transplant Surgeons* 9.Suppl 4 (2009): S108-S115. PMC. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2919834/> Web. 24 July 2015.

ⁱⁱⁱ US Pharmacist. "Herpes Zoster (Shingles) and Postherpetic Neuralgia Management" Release Date: May 1, 2009 http://www.uspharmacist.com/continuing_education/ceviewtest/lessonid/106103/ accessed 24 June 2015.

^{iv} WebMD. Shingles Help Center. <http://www.webmd.com/skin-problems-and-treatments/shingles/shingles-come-back?page=2> accessed 24 June 2015.

^v Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals Office of Public Health Immunization Schedule 2014-2015. http://new.dhh.louisiana.gov/assets/oph/Center-PHCH/Center-PH/immunizations/Imm_Schedule.pdf accessed 24 June 2015.

^{vi} Louisiana Board of Pharmacy. "Act 769 of 2014 Legislature & Pharmacist Immunization Recordkeeping" <http://www.pharmacy.la.gov/index.cfm?md=pagebuilder&tmp=home&pid=290> accessed 24 June 2015.

^{vii} Pharmacist's Letter. Online Continuing Education and Webinars. "A Review of New Drugs Released in 2014" Vol. 2015. Course #205. <http://pharmacistsletter.therapeuticresearch.com/ce/ceCourse.aspx?cs=STUDENT&s=PL&pc=15-205&pm=0&quiz=1&searchid=52563739#keywordanchor> January 2015.