

Varicella-Zoster (Chickenpox/Shingles)

CHICKENPOX



SHINGLES



Cause



- caused by a virus called varicella-zoster
- transmitted by direct contact with fluids from the nose and throat of the infected person, or through contact with fluid from skin blisters of infected person
- the virus stays in your body after having chickenpox and may reappear as shingles

Symptoms



Chickenpox:

- itchy rash that begins as small, fluid filled blisters that dry and crust over to form scabs
- may have mild fever and feel tired
- symptoms begin 2-3 weeks after contact with infected person
- can be spread to others up until 2-3 days before the rash appears, and until the blisters are crusted over (usually takes about 5 days)

Symptoms con't...



Shingles:

- reddened, fluid filled blisters grouped closely together in one area of the body
- rash usually lasts about 7-10 days and can be painful
- not usually as contagious as chickenpox
- ****Note:** those who are immune to chickenpox are not at risk of exposure with shingles

Treatment



- mainly supportive therapy for symptoms
- oral antiviral medication may be prescribed if within 24-48 hours of the start of the rash to reduce the number of skin lesions.

****Note:** do not give Aspirin/ASA to children or teenagers with chickenpox

Work Restrictions



- **If symptomatic or infected with Chickenpox**, staff must remain out of the workplace until all blisters are dry and crusted.
****Contact Occupational Health** so that contact tracing may be done for staff and patients who may have been exposed to you.
 - **If symptomatic or infected with Shingles**, staff can work as long as all lesions can be covered, either by clothing or a dressing. If not, staff member can return to work when all lesions are dry and crusted.
Contact Occupational Health.
- **Note:** If the staff member works with immunocompromised patients and cannot be temporarily reassigned, or they are immunocompromised themselves, they should stay off work until all lesions are dry and crusted.

Work Restrictions con't...



- **If exposed to Chickenpox** (including family members) staff may work as long as they have immunity to chickenpox (immunity would be through having had the disease or having two vaccinations for chickenpox).
****Note: Contact Occupational Health** as soon as possible if this is not the case or if you are unsure of your immune status so blood work can be arranged to check for immunity.
- **If exposed to Shingles**, (including family members) staff may work as long as they have immunity to chickenpox (immunity would be through having had the disease or having two vaccinations for chickenpox).
****Note: Contact Occupational Health** as soon as possible if this is not the case or if you are unsure of your immune status so blood work can be arranged to check for immunity.

Work Restrictions con't...



****Other:**

All new Capital Health employees are required to provide proof of immunization against chickenpox (i.e.. history of disease or documentation of two vaccines or proof of immunization via blood work).

Prevention



- good hand hygiene practices and adherence to Infection Control principles
- know your immune status for Chickenpox, and get immunized (two doses) if not immune