

Shingles & Postherpetic Neuralgia Fact Sheet

Shingles and Postherpetic Neuralgia

- Herpes Zoster, also known as shingles, is an outbreak of rash or blisters on the skin caused by the varicella zoster virus, the same virus that causes chickenpox. After chickenpox, the virus can stay quiet, or dormant, in a patient's nerve tissue for years and can flare up again as shingles¹.
 - Everyone who has had chickenpox is at risk for shingles¹.
 - Early symptoms of shingles include burning or shooting pain, numbness, tingling or itching on a side of the patient's body or face. Mild flu-like symptoms including headache, fever, chill and nausea may also occur followed by an outbreak of rash or blisters¹.
 - Shingles may disappear without major consequence in two to four weeks in otherwise healthy individuals, but the risk of complications from shingles increases with age, weakened immunity and delay or lack of treatment¹.
- Complications resulting from shingles include postherpetic neuralgia (PHN) or after-shingles pain.
 - PHN pain is caused by injury to the peripheral nerves that occurs during shingles¹ and usually occurs in area of the shingles rash. However, the size of the PHN pain region can vary considerably².

Impact of Postherpetic Neuralgia

- PHN pain is often described as burning, aching, sharp and itching² and in some patients can last months or even years³.
- Pain from PHN can be so severe that it significantly affects an individual's quality of life⁴.
 - PHN pain can lead to serious depression and is one of the most common causes of pain-related suicide in the elderly⁴. Family members and caregivers also suffer from the impact of PHN pain on their loved ones².
 - It can lead to numbness, loss of muscle and, in a minority of patients, abnormal skin temperature, skin color and sweating in the affected area².
 - Because of PHN, the patient's skin may become sensitive to changes in temperature¹ and the feel of clothing and daily tasks such as bathing, dressing and grooming may be painful².
 - Pleasurable activities, such as shopping, cooking, traveling and sports, can also be limited by severe PHN pain².

Who Suffers from Shingles and Postherpetic Neuralgia

- Approximately one in three people in the United States will have shingles during their life – resulting in approximately 1 million shingles cases in the U.S. every year⁵.
- About one in five of those who suffer from shingles will go on to develop PHN⁶.
- Older people with weakened immune systems are more likely to suffer from shingles and PHN⁷.
 - Of shingles sufferers, people age 50 or older have a more than 50 percent chance of developing PHN and people age 80 or older have an 80 percent chance of developing PHN⁸.
- Some people may still suffer from pain a year after their shingles rash has healed².

Treatment Options

Shingles

- Antiviral medications are usually prescribed to treat shingles. Early treatment with one of these drugs – ideally within 72 hours of the rash appearing – may decrease both the duration of the shingles outbreak and intensity³.
- A shingles vaccine was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2006 and is currently recommended by the CDC for adults age 60 and older in the U.S.⁶
 - In a clinical trial involving thousands of adults age 60 or older, the shingles vaccine reduced the risk of shingles by 51 percent and the risk of PHN by 67 percent. However, the vaccine does not treat shingles or PHN once it develops⁹.

Postherpetic Neuralgia

- Currently, there is no cure for PHN³, but two topical treatments and two oral treatments are approved by the FDA for the relief of pain associated with the condition.
 - The lidocaine patch 5% was first approved by the FDA more than 10 years ago as a prescription patch for relief of pain associated with PHN.
 - The lidocaine patch 5% is placed on the skin directly at the site of pain and can be used either alone or with systemic oral analgesics with a low risk of drug interaction effects¹⁰.
 - In 2009, a capsaicin patch 8% was approved by the FDA for the management of neuropathic pain associated with PHN.
 - The patch is to be applied only by a healthcare professional at the site of PHN pain on the patient's skin during an office visit for a 60-minute interval, with a topical anesthetic being applied prior to capsaicin patch 8% application¹¹.
 - The two oral treatments approved by the FDA for PHN pain, gabapentin and pregabalin, provide pain relief by traveling through the body to reach the site of action within the central nervous system^{12,13}.
- It is important for those who may be suffering from PHN pain to schedule an appointment with a healthcare professional to discuss which medication may work best for them.

REFERENCES

1. Shingles & PHN: Your Questions Answered. VZV Research Foundation, Inc. 2000: 1-12. Available at: http://vzvfoundation.org/publicdownloads/Shingles_PHN_Q&A_2000.pdf. Accessed October 13, 2008.
2. Galer BS. Advances in the Treatment of Postherpetic Neuralgia: The Topical Lidocaine Patch. Today's Therapeutic Trends. 2000; 1-20.
3. Cure PHN: Your Questions Answered. VZV Research Foundation, Inc. 2004: 1-6. Available at: http://www.vzvfoundation.org/publicdownloads/PHN_Brochure_Feb2004.pdf. Accessed October 13, 2008.
4. Schmader K. Postherpetic neuralgia in immunocompetent elderly people. Vaccine. 1998; 16: 1768-1770
5. Harpaz R, Ortega-Sanchez IR and Seward JF. Prevention of Herpes Zoster: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. 2008; 57(05): 1-30. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5705a1.htm>
6. Shingles Vaccine: What You Need to Know. Department of Health and Human Services: Centers for Disease Control. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/vis/downloads/vis-shingles.pdf>. Accessed October 9, 2008.
7. Pain Management Guide: Postherpetic Neuralgia. WebMD. Available at: <http://www.webmd.com/skin-problems-and-treatments/shingles/postherpetic-neuralgia>. Accessed October 9, 2008.
8. Cluff RS, Rowbotham MC. Pain caused by herpes zoster infection. Neurol Clin. 1998; 16(4):813-832.
9. Vaccines and Preventable Diseases: Herpes Zoster Vaccine Q&A (Shingles). Department of Health and Human Services: Centers for Disease Control. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/shingles/vac-faqs.htm>. Accessed November 16, 2009.
10. LIDODERM® Complete Prescribing Information. Chadds Ford, PA: Endo Pharmaceuticals; 2008.
11. QUTENZA® Complete Prescribing Information. San Mateo, CA: NeurogesX; 2009.
12. LYRICA® Complete Prescribing Information. New York, NY: Pfizer, Inc; 2008.
13. NEURONTIN® Complete Prescribing Information. New York, NY: Pfizer, Inc; 2008.