



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Shingles

Shingles can often be a difficult condition, which is why it's important to work closely with your doctor to treat your symptoms. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Varicella Zoster	The virus that causes chickenpox, one of the viruses in the family of herpes viruses.
Latent Virus	After a chickenpox infection, the virus remains in the body in a latent, inactive form. It remains in one or more of the dorsal nerve roots, which are the nerves in the spinal cord that control sensation.
Reactivation	The chickenpox virus can reactivate after years, causing shingles, a different illness than it did the first time. Most of the time, it is not clear why the virus reactivated.
Herpes Zoster	When the chickenpox virus reactivates, causing a rash and pain, the condition is called herpes zoster or shingles.
Active Lesions	The blisters or open sores that are present with shingles. These active lesions may contain the virus, and they can be contagious to other people.
Sensory Nerve Root	A large nerve in the spinal cord that controls a large area of movement or sensation of the body. The pain and rash of shingles follows the path of a sensory nerve root and may cause pain and a rash along an area that wraps around half of the body, almost in the shape of a string.
Neuropathic Pain	Pain that is caused by a disease or irritation of a nerve. It is different from the type of pain that occurs from an injury.
Shingles Vaccine	There is a vaccine available for the prevention of shingles, and it has been shown to be effective for some people.
Immunosuppression	If the immune system is not functioning optimally, either due to an illness, medication, or malnutrition, this can increase susceptibility to infections, including shingles.
Postherpetic Neuralgia	After shingles resolves, persistent pain can remain for months or even years. Postherpetic neuralgia is a complication of shingles.

