



Buzz, Body & Bites

A newsletter for actively aging adults
Virginia Cooperative Extension Family & Consumer Sciences
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Shingles (Herpes Zoster)

When you hear the word shingles, do you think of a roof or the neurological condition that affects the aging population disproportionately? This article will stay away from construction terms like ‘shingles’ and ‘rafters’, and focus on understanding your risk of developing the virus which is the same one that causes chickenpox, and lies dormant in our bodies, specifically in the spinal cord, without our knowledge. Shingles is a painful rash with blisters that occur on one side of the body. The rash usually clears up in 2 to 4 weeks, but the pain can last for months or even years in some people. The most common symptom of shingles is a red, pustular rash that is linear and on one side of the body. Your presenting symptom may be vague like a tingling, itchy sensation in a specific area of the body, with the rash appearing in time. The question I often get when discussing preventative measures against shingles is “can I give this to someone else”. Fortunately, the fluid from the blister will not cause shingles. It can cause chickenpox, however, in someone who has not had it before or has not been vaccinated. Also, you can have a recurrence of shingles so a previous episode does not mean you will not have a future one.

Shingles is commonly diagnosed by observing your symptoms. There are confirmatory tests that can be performed on the fluid from a blister, but laboratory testing is not standard practice. In the majority of cases the pain and tingling resolves before the rash. If it remains the term, Postherpetic Neuralgia (PHN) is used. This sequela may require long-term treatment, with pain the primary complaint. An interesting fact is that many individuals do not recall if they have ever had chickenpox. Still, preventative vaccination can significantly limit this condition and reduce the potential long-term pain. There have been previous vaccines available for this condition but currently two doses of recombinant zoster vaccine (Shingrix) is the preventative measure of choice. For those who contract shingles, with or without previous vaccination, early treatment is best. The treatments are the same antivirals that the medical community uses to prevent and treat oral or genital herpes. Why? Well, shingles and herpes simplex share the same family called Herpesviridae. However, how you get these two viruses is very different.

What can you do to limit your risk of contraction and complications of this virus?

First, speak with your primary care provider, and identify your risk. If you are a candidate for preventative vaccination, weigh your risks and benefits and proceed with shared decision-making with your provider.

Contributed by Abraham B. Hardee III, DO/PhD; Family Medicine Physician

Who should get the shingles vaccination - shingrix

Consult with your healthcare provider about whether or not you should get the Shingrix vaccination.

Some general guidelines from the CDC include:

- Adults age 50 and older should get 2 doses of the Shingrix vaccine.
- Adults age 19 and older who have a weakened immune system should also get 2 doses of the Shingrix vaccine.
- You can get the Shingrix vaccine whether or not you remember having chickenpox in the past.

- There is no maximum age for getting the Shingrix vaccine.
- You can get the Shingrix vaccine even if you have had shingles. It can help future occurrences.
- Information from: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/shingles/public/shingrix/index.html>

Beef Fajitas

Beef fajitas are filled with protein, iron, and zinc, which are important to immune function. This recipe can be cooked in the oven or on the grill for extra flavor.

Source: Source: <https://dinnertonight.tamu.edu/recipe/beef-fajitas>

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon of paprika
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ½ teaspoon salt
- Juice of 1 lime
- 1 medium sliced white onion
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 1 pound Flank Steak
- 8 tortillas
- 2 medium sliced bell peppers

Instructions:

Makes 4 servings

1. Mix the six spices, salt, and lime juice to make a paste.
2. Place the steak in a sealable plastic bag and add the spice paste. Coat the steak with the paste.
3. Cook the steak on the grill or in the oven (350 °F) to an internal temperature of 145 °F (8 - 10 minutes). Remove and cut into thin slices.
4. Cook the onion and pepper over medium heat on the grill (recommend using a grill basket) until the vegetables soften.
5. Assemble the beef and vegetables in the tortillas and serve with your favorite sides.

Flexibility Exercises Neck Stretches

- Start sitting or standing in a comfortable position.
- Take your right hand and place it gently on the left side of your head.
- Slowly and carefully tilt your right ear towards your right shoulder while allowing your hand to gently pull to create a nice stretch in your neck.
- You should feel the stretch on your left side of your neck
- Release slowly and come back to the starting position. Repeat two more times.
- Switch sides and repeat on the other side.

Resources:

For information on shingles, symptoms, treatments, and vaccines:

National Institute on Aging www.nia.nih.gov/health/shingles

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov/shingles/about/index.html

Cleveland Clinic my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/11036-shingles

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