

Shingles can be a Real Pain!

Bedford Board of Health Is Offering Vaccination for Shingles

Shingles, also known as zoster, is a painful skin rash often with blisters caused by the *Varicella Zoster* virus, the same virus that causes chickenpox. Different from other rashes, a shingles rash usually appears on one side of the face or body and is accompanied with severe nerve pain. Other symptoms can include fever, headache, chills and upset stomach. In some rare cases, a shingle infection can also lead to pneumonia, hearing problems, and blindness. For about 1 in 5 cases, severe nerve pain could continue even long after the rash clears up. This is called post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN). Approximately one million new cases of shingles occur in the United States annually and one in three in the general population will develop shingles during their lifetime.

Only someone who has had chickenpox can get shingles and you can get Shingles multiple times. The *Varicella Zoster* virus stays in your body and can cause shingles many years later. Shingles is more common in people 50 years of age and older. It is also more common in people whose immune system is weakened because of diseases such as cancer, or drugs such as steroids or chemotherapy. A vaccine for shingles was licensed in 2006. In clinical trials, the vaccine reduced the risk of shingles by 50%. It can also reduce the level of the pain in people who still get shingles after being vaccinated. A single dose of Shingles vaccine is recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) for adults 60 years of age and older. A person should not get Shingles vaccine if allergic to gelatin, neomycin or other components of the vaccine, or has a weakened immune system because of disease or current cancer treatments. You are recommended to talk to your primary care physician on whether you should get the vaccine.

The Bedford Board of Health has a limited supply of Shingles vaccine and has scheduled two appointment-only Clinics for Bedford residents over age 60. The first clinic is scheduled on Friday, March 14, 2014, 10 - 11 AM at the Town Center Building (yellow building behind Town Hall), 12 Mudge Way, Flint Room, Second Floor. The second clinic is scheduled on Monday, April 7, 2014, 6 - 7 PM in the same location. For an appointment, please call the Bedford Board of Health at 781-275-6507. Although the clinic is free of charge, the Board of Health asks that you provide your medical insurance information for reimbursement purposes. The Shingles vaccine will be given on a first come first served basis.