

From: The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

Press Release: New shingles vaccination for people 60 and older to bring welcome relief

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What: The Food and Drug Administration has approved and the Centers for Disease Control recommend people over the age of 60 to be vaccinated against the virus that causes the often painful condition known as shingles.

Shingles - is a disorder caused by the reactivation of the chickenpox virus. It shows up as a blistering rash located in a patch on one side of the body, usually lasting about 10 days. The Virus travels down the nerve fibers that supply the effected area, and blisters (similar to chickenpox) break out on that area of the skin.

Who: This condition is **more common and more severe** in older patients (60 or older).

Other facts: Shingles can result in prolonged severe pain (in about 1 in 5 cases) in the region where the rash is located even after the rash has cleared up. Additionally, the shingles patient could be contagious to others, however the risk is small as long as the patient covers the blisters and hands are washed after contact. The disease is not spread in the same fashion that the flu or chickenpox is spread (by coughing or sneezing).

Prevention: A live virus vaccine has now been developed and approved for use – Zostavax – that can prevent or significantly reduce the effects of an outbreak of shingles. This vaccine is currently only recommended for persons 60 and older who are not immuno-compromised (by such things as AIDS, chemo patients for cancer, persons on steroid therapy, or leukemia)

Shot side effects? As with all medications, problems such as allergic reactions are a possibility. However, the primary side effects of this new vaccine include:

- Redness, soreness swelling, or itching around the site of the shot (1 in 3 persons)
- Headache (in about 1 in 70 persons)

* Having had a case of shingles before, does not exclude you from getting vaccinated

The Community Health Agency will begin offering this vaccine after December 18, 2006 on an appointment basis only. The cost of the vaccine is \$175.00, but check with your insurance carrier or Medicare to determine if this is a covered vaccine. You can call our clinics today to find out more about shingles or to make an appointment.

Coldwater
517-279-9561 x 139

Hillsdale
517-437-7395 x 110

Sturgis
269-659-4013 x 109

Three Rivers
269-273-2161 x 241

Visit the CDC Web site for additional information about shingles at:

www.cdc.gov