

# Carel's Pharmacy & Compounding Center

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## What is Shingles?

Shingles (herpes zoster) are an outbreak of rash or blisters on the skin that is caused by the same virus that causes chicken pox - the varicella-zoster virus. The first sign of shingles is often burning or tingling pain, or sometimes numbness, in or under the skin. You may also feel ill with fever, chills, headache, or upset stomach. After several days, a rash of small fluid-filled blisters, reminiscent of chickenpox, appears on reddened skin. The pain associated with shingles can be intense and is often described as "unrelenting." People with lesions on the torso may feel spasms of pain at the gentlest touch or breeze. The blisters are usually limited to a band, called dermatomes, spanning one side of the trunk, around the waistline, or clustered on one side of the face.

## Who is at Risk for Shingles?

Anyone who has had chickenpox is at risk for shingles. Scientists think that in the original battle with varicella-zoster, some of the virus particles leave the skin blisters and move into the nervous system. When the varicella-zoster virus reactivates, the virus moves back down the long nerve fibers that extend from the sensory cell bodies to the skin and cause the characteristic blisters of shingles.

About 10 percent of normal adults can be expected to get shingles during their lifetimes, usually after age 50. The incidence increases with age so that shingles is 10 times more likely to occur in adults over 60 than in children under 10. Most people who get shingles develop immunity to the virus and will not get the disease again, however, shingles may recur in some individuals. These cases usually involve people with declining or compromised immune systems, such as those receiving chemotherapy.

## What is a Compounded Treatment for Shingles?

Shingles Gel is a combination of medications in a transdermal gel applied to the affected area. This method of application allows for concentration of the medicinal agents at the site of action without the drowsiness and other adverse effects seen when these agents are given orally.

This month's featured compound is **Shingles Gel**.

**Shingles Gel** is a compounded topical treatment for shingles. It is a transdermal gel with a combination of medications, including Deoxy-D-Glucose 0.2%, Gabapentin 5%, Ketoprofen 5%, Amitriptyline 2% and Tetracaine 1%. The special transdermal gel base allows rapid penetration of active ingredients to target tissues. This combination of medications target several different neurotransmitters associated with the neuropathic pain accompanying shingles and post-herpetic neuralgia. Shingles Gel is applied topically to affected area three times daily and as needed up to six times daily.

If you have any questions regarding these therapies or any other medication related problems, please call our specially trained compounding pharmacists and staff at (580) 355-4540.