

Welcome to Today's Medical Education Program!

- I am pleased to be here with you on behalf of Merck & Co., Inc. who is sponsoring this medical education program.
- The program you are participating in is not an accredited Continuing Medical Education program.
- The information presented throughout the program will be consistent with FDA guidelines.



PAMELA PRINDLE'S INSIGHTS ON ZOSTER

Anyone who has had chickenpox is infected with the varicella-zoster virus that can develop into shingles at any time in his or her life. This means that over 90 percent of the US adult population is at risk for shingles, especially those over 60 years of age, because the incidence and severity of zoster increase with age.

Many of the patients I see ask me about shingles. "What is it like?" "How will it make me feel?" They either have heard about shingles from a friend or have had a family member recently come down with shingles. I tell them the first sign of shingles can be a rash that appears on one side of the body. The rash begins as a cluster of red spots that often blister and can be extremely painful as a result of intense inflammation and nerve irritation. In most cases the rash can persist up to 30 days and the pain usually subsides as the rash heals. A potentially severe complication of shingles can sometimes be a debilitating neuropathic pain syndrome called postherpetic neuralgia. I have heard patients describe this pain as excruciating, as if the skin is on fire.

My own father developed shingles on his back and it was very painful for him. He couldn't put on any clothing that would come in contact with the painful area, even when the rash was covered with a dressing. He was uncomfortable sleeping at night because the sheet brushed against the skin, causing severe pain. Fortunately he did not develop postherpetic neuralgia.

As a nursing director for a medical clinic, I often spend time counseling patients about herpes zoster. I let them know that as they get older, their risk for developing shingles increases. As health care professionals, we need to do everything we can to make sure our patients are aware of their risk for developing shingles.