

Guidance for Pharmacy Staff – Shingles

What is shingles?

Shingles is caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox. If someone gets chickenpox, the virus stays in the body and can be reactivated later, presenting as shingles. The first signs of shingles can be a tingling or painful sensation in an area of skin, followed by a rash a few days later. A headache or feeling generally unwell may also occur. The rash usually appears on one side of the body only. If the patient is eligible for the Pharmacy First service, the pharmacist will recommend the most suitable treatment option following a consultation.

Self-care key points:

- Use pain relief if appropriate, e.g. paracetamol or ibuprofen
- Keep the rash clean and dry / Avoid scratching
- Follow safety-netting advice
- Signpost eligible patients to shingles vaccination information after recovery, where appropriate

3-step guide for pharmacy teams

Step 1 – Safety first

Before you provide the patient with the Patient Checklist to complete, first check for any red flag symptoms which may indicate serious illness.

Red flag symptoms include:

- confusion or disorientation
- sensitivity to light
- loss of bladder or bowel control
- neck stiffness
- muscle weakness
- facial weakness or facial nerve paralysis

Signpost to A&E or call 999 if severe.



Step 2 – Gateway reminder

Suspected shingles should be referred to the pharmacist for assessment.

Look out for:

- tingling, burning, stabbing or painful skin symptoms
- a rash affecting one side of the body
- a rash that develops into blisters or crusting
- a rash that appears 2–3 days after onset of pain

The pharmacist will:

- check for red flags
- assess whether the presentation follows typical shingles progression
- assess timing and eligibility for management



Step 3 - Patient checklist guidance – route correctly

Ask the patient to complete the Shingles Patient Checklist prior to consultation with the pharmacist.

Once the patient returns the completed checklist to you, use the following guidance on appropriate next steps:



If...	Do...
There are any ticks in Section 1	They are not eligible for the Pharmacy First service. Advise the patient to seek treatment from their GP or out of hours service.
There are 2 or more ticks in Section 2	Refer to the pharmacist. The patient may need urgent onward referral.
If the patient has ticked any boxes in Section 3	Refer to the pharmacist. The patient may be eligible for management within the Pharmacy First service. This may result in self-care advice, referral, OTC sale or PGD supply.
If the patient has ticked any boxes in Section 4	Refer to the pharmacist. The patient may be eligible for management within the Pharmacy First service and these questions will help the pharmacist recommend the most appropriate treatment.
Additional Considerations	Immunosuppressed patients - higher risk of complications - refer to the pharmacist urgently If out of hours, the pharmacist may supply antiviral treatment if appropriate and notify the patient's GP / send urgent notification.

Patient Checklist — Shingles

You are being asked to complete this checklist as you have presented in the pharmacy wishing to access management for symptoms of shingles. Please answer these questions carefully as this will help our colleagues ensure you receive the most appropriate care. Please be assured our staff will treat this information confidentially.

Name: _____

DOB: ____/____/____

Date: ____/____/____

Section 1 — Not eligible for Pharmacy First

☐	Are aged 17 years or under
☐	Are pregnant or there is a chance you might be pregnant

Section 2 — Refer to Pharmacist

☐	Are immunosuppressed
☐	Are experiencing redness of the eye(s) or vision problems
☐	Have a rash on your nose

Section 3 — Possible shingles symptoms

☐	Have a fever
☐	Have a headache
☐	Have a rash which:
☐	Began as a burning, stabbing, throbbing, itching or tingling sensation
☐	Appeared initially as red spots on a pink-red background
☐	Some blisters have now burst, others filled with blood or pus, and the area is dry with crusts and scabs forming
☐	Is only on one side of your body

Section 4 — Helps determine treatment

Have a rash which appeared within the last 72 hours and

☐	Is affecting your neck, limbs, anus or genital area
☐	Is causing you moderate to severe pain
☐	You are aged 50 years or over

OR have a rash which appeared within the last 7 days and

☐	Is causing you severe pain
☐	Is not healing / there is continued blistering
☐	You have severe atopic dermatitis, eczema, or other skin condition
☐	You are aged 70 years or over

Please hand the completed checklist back to a member of staff.