

Chickenpox and Shingles

March 29, 2008

Many local residents over age 60 have been calling the non-profit Visiting Nurse Association recently asking for information about shingles and the new immunization available against this painful skin rash.

The new vaccine was licensed in 2006 and, in trials, prevented shingles in about half of people 60 years of age and older, said Andrea Zoodsma, RN, VNA Community Services clinical supervisor. Shingles, or herpes zoster, is a disease caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox. After you have had chickenpox, that virus remains inactive in your body in certain nerve tissue. The virus can resurface as people age -- and results in shingles.

Shingles is a painful skin rash, often with fluid-filled blisters that can take 2-4 weeks to crust over and heal, and pain that can last for months or even years. More specific information about the new vaccine can be obtained from your doctor or the VNA Immunization Services Information Line at 648-3777, where appointments can be made for the Zostavax vaccination.

###