



Health Update

Monday, 23rd February 2009

Shingles!

Dear Parents,

I need to inform you that we have a case of Shingles in K2 DaVinci Class

What is shingles and how common is it?

Shingles is an infection of a nerve and the area of skin supplied by the nerve. It is caused by a virus called the varicella-zoster virus. It is the **same virus** that causes chickenpox. Anyone who has had chickenpox in the past may develop shingles.

What are the symptoms of shingles?

The virus usually affects one nerve only, on one side of the body. Symptoms occur in the area of skin that the nerve supplies. The usual symptoms are pain and a rash. Occasionally, two or three nerves next to each other are affected.

The most commonly involved nerves are those supplying the skin on the chest or abdomen. The upper face (including an eye) is also a common site.

The pain is a localised 'band' of pain. It can be anywhere on the body, depending on which nerve is affected. The pain can range from mild to severe. You may have a constant dull, burning, or gnawing pain. In addition, or instead, you may have sharp and stabbing pains that come and go. The affected area of skin is usually tender.

The rash typically appears 2-3 days after the pain begins. Red blotches appear that quickly develop into itchy blisters. The rash looks like chickenpox, but only appears on the band of skin supplied by the affected nerve. New blisters may appear for up to a week. They dry up, form scabs, and gradually fade away.

An episode of shingles usually lasts 2-4 weeks. In some cases there is a rash but no pain. Rarely, there is no rash but just a band of pain. You may also feel feverish and unwell for a few days.

Is shingles contagious?

Yes, you can catch **chickenpox** from someone with shingles if you have not had chickenpox before. (You cannot get shingles itself from someone who has shingles.)

As with chicken pox, the shingles rash is contagious until all the blisters have scabbed and are dry. Therefore should your child develop chicken pox then it is critical that she/he remain at home. Not only because of increasing the risk of infection, but also chicken pox is an uncomfortable childhood disease and therefore children need to be nursed to good health in the comfort of their own home.

Please refer to the website below if you are uncertain of the symptoms of chicken pox. Spots are the common indicator but the virus can incubate for some time prior to spots appearing which is why Chicken Pox is a difficult virus to control the spread of in school.

Fever and feeling unwell are often early indicators. If you believe your child may be unwell, please keep him/her at home. If you are able to confirm that your child has chicken pox, please inform the school office immediately so that we can monitor the spread.

For further information I recommend the website:

www.kidshealth.org

Thank you and kind regards,

Julia