

Health Awareness article submitted by Christine Felding, Consultant Specialist in Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

## SHINGLES and Prevention

Shingles is enormously painful, no matter where it is !

Shingles is a disease that can attack at anytime (but most often around the age of 50 years) if you have had chickenpox as a child.

It is due to the virus lying dormant for many years in the nerve centers and then breaking out at some point. Unlike chickenpox which usually spreads over the whole body, shingles is always unilateral and follows a single nerve root.

The latest patient I saw was a 60-year-old woman who for days was experiencing a violent burning pain in her left groin. When she came to me I could see small blisters which followed a nerve in one half of the body so the diagnosis of shingles (*herpes zoster*) was not difficult to make. She was started on treatment immediately with antiviral medication to shorten the course together with painkillers.

Early diagnosed is very important to aid a faster recovery.

The problem with shingles is that some patients develop *post-herpetic neuralgia* i.e. pain in the nerve paths after the infection has already gone.



This may be prevented by a vaccination with *Zostavax*<sup>®</sup>. The vaccine was introduced in Denmark some years ago but currently is unfortunately backordered, and is not expected to be available again until late 2014.

Until then it is possible to get the vaccination at my clinic in Rungsted Kyst.

If you would like more details and information please contact me.

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### **Postscript from Christine Bank:**

*I have seen a number of friends and family suffering with Shingles and have recently received the Zostavax vaccination myself without any side effects. I am very happy to feel more protected in the future.*

*As one friend said, if it's possible to be vaccinated, do it!! She has and still is experiencing nerve pain many months later.*