

Dr. Colin Gage * Dr. Duane Drobot

Nicola Valley Chiropractic
2076 Granite Ave.
P.O. Box 909
Merritt, BC
V1K 1B8

Ph: (250) 378-5456
Fax: (250) 378-8259
Email: info@merrittchiro.com
Website: www.merrittchiro.com

"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"

Ever Had Shingles?

If you have ever been unfortunate enough to experience “shingles”, it is unlikely that you have forgotten how painful it was. Each year, millions of North Americans will be afflicted with the “Varicella Zoster” virus that causes shingles. This virus is the same virus that causes chicken pox. Therefore, if you were afflicted with chicken pox as a child, you have a 1 in 10 chance of facing a second outbreak of the same virus at a later date in the form of shingles. This nasty little virus is from the family of “herpes” viruses and can remain dormant for most of your life in your nerves just as they exit the spine. A healthy immune system can keep these viruses from reinfecting you. However, when the opportunity arises, they travel along the nerve paths and cause a microscopic path of damage along the way. This can continue for up to a week and can be very painful. When the viruses reach the end of the nerve, a nasty and very painful skin rash will appear. This rash begins as a patch or strip of raised dots on one side of the body and is commonly seen at the trunk, forehead, abdomen, or legs. After a few days, the spots become blisters filled with fluid that contain the viruses. Within about two weeks, the blisters will dry up, crust, and no longer contain any viruses.

If you are wondering what causes the virus to suddenly infect your nerves and skin, it is almost always when you are under some form of stress or weakened state of health. Excessive emotional or physical stress, HIV or Aids, and some medications (corticosteroids, cancer drugs) can weaken your immune system and leave you vulnerable to almost any kind of opportunistic infection. This is why chiropractic patients who receive regular treatment, exercise often, eat properly, avoid stress, and get adequate amounts of sleep do not fall victim to colds, flues, and other infections like their co-workers. Unfortunately, the elderly are the most commonly afflicted because their immune system is often not as strong as it used to be. This is why I commonly, but not always, see it my practice in patients over 65 years old. In fact, last week I had a 40-year-old patient come to see me with severe back and leg pain (sciatica). Although he had mild problems in his back, they were not serious enough to be causing the sciatica he was experiencing. Then, a very painful blistering rash broke out the next day that extended from his buttock to the bottom of his foot. He had the nastiest bout of shingles I have ever seen!

If you did not notice, I mentioned earlier that the virus that causes chicken pox and shingles is a member of the “herpes” virus family. Before you jump off the couch to check if you caught “genital herpes” or a “cold sore” from your great grandmother’s last bout of shingles, you will be happy to know that they are not the same viruses. The only thing you will catch from a person with shingles is chicken pox, and only if you have never had them before or have never been vaccinated against that particular virus.

There are some anti-viral and pain medications that can help but you basically have to let the infection run its course. On a separate note, if you think you may have shingles on your face, see you an Ophthalmologist immediately! Shingles on your face can infect your eye and cause permanent blindness.