

[IMAGE]

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## **How Do You Treat Shingles?**

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*Editor's Note:* This article was excerpted from Mr. Gaeddert's book, *Healing Skin Disorders*, published by North Atlantic Books.

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Shingles is caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox.

The virus can remain dormant in nerve cells for many years after the onset of chickenpox. The first symptom of a herpes zoster attack is usually pain or tingling over the area to be affected. A few days later, a red rash appears. The red bumps soon turn to virus-filled blisters which then dry, crust, and turn yellow. Eruptions usually occur on only one side of the body, either over the ribs, on one half of the face, or as a strip on one half of the neck and adjoining arm; or on the lower body.

Typically shingles strikes the elderly and those with suppressed immune systems. Postherpetic neuralgia is pain due to nerve damage. It may be serious and persist for many months. A herpes zoster attack accompanied by eye pain should be reported to a physician immediately, as ophthalmic herpes zoster may have serious complications. Standard biomedical treatments for herpes zoster include analgesics for pain, soothing lotions, wet compresses and steroids. Acyclovir taken at the first sign of an outbreak may lessen the severity of the attack.

### **Self-Treatments**

- Myrrh tincture: Take internally 1/2 to 1 dropperful (three to four times daily); apply topically to affected area (three times daily).
- Antioxidant formula that contains zinc and selenium (follow label instructions).
- St. John's wort oil: Apply topically to affected area (three to four times daily). This is effective for pain in many patients.
- Lemon balm tea: Steep one tablespoon dried lemon balm leaves in one cup of boiled water for 15

minutes. Strain and apply as a warm or cool compress depending on preference (three to four times daily). Lemon balm stops viral replication.

## Professional Treatments

Chinese herbal therapy includes the administration of tonic herbs to strengthen the immune system, herbal antivirals, and specific pain-relieving herbs used topically and internally.

- Three tablets of an isatis formula, consisting of isatis extract (*da qing ye & ban lan gen*); astragalus (*huang qi*); bupleurum (*chai hu*); laminaria (*kun bu*); codonopsis (*dang shen*); epimedium (*yin yang huo*); lycium fruit (*gou qi zi*); dioscorea (*shan yao*); broussonetia (*chu shi zi*); atractylodes (*bai zhu*); and licorice (*gan cao*), can be taken three times a day. This is used to strengthen the immune system and to clear the virus. For fever and areas that feel hot to the touch, add a heat formula, consisting of isatis extract; oldenlandia (*bai hua she she cao*); lonicera (*jin yin hua*); prunella (*xia ku cao*); andrographis (*chuan xin lian*); laminaria; viola (*zi hua di din*); cordyceps (*dong chong xia cao*); and licorice, taking one to three tablets, three times a day. The heat formula can also be used as a wash (three to four times a day) and a poultice (change twice a day).
- A mobility formula comprised of red peony (*chi shao*); tang kuei (*dang gui*); ligusticum (*chuan xiong*); rehmannia (*shu di huang*); persica (*tao ren*); atractylodes; poria (*fu ling*); citrus (*chen pi*); siler (*fang feng*); vitex (*man jing zi*); gentiana (*qin jiao*); achyranthes (*niu xi*); chiang huo (*qiang huo*); clematis (*wei ling xian*); ginger (*gan jiang*); angelica (*bai zhi*); and licorice, taken at three tablets three to four times a day, is especially useful for pain that migrates. Combine this with the heat formula for heat signs, or the isatis formula if the patient is weak.
- A mushroom formula, consisting of ganoderma (*rei shi/ling zhi*); tremella (*bai mu er*); poria; and polyporus (*zhu ling*), is used to boost the immune system. Dosage is two to three tablets, three times a day. This is especially useful for cold signs when combined with the isatis formula long-term.
- A dragon's blood formula, made from dragon's blood (*xue jie*); tienchi root (*san qi*); catechu (*er cha*); corydalis (*yan hu suo*); carthamus (*hong hua*); myrrh (*mo yao*); frankincense (*ru xiang*); borneol (*bing pian*); alcohol; and glycerine, can be taken internally at the rate of one-half dropperful three to four times per day, or massaged into affected area. It can also be combined with powdered selenium or the heat formula to form a poultice, which is applied twice daily. Cover with gauze.
- A channel formula, consisting of corydalis rhizome; angelica root; peony root (*bai shao*); cinnamon twig (*gui zhi*); tang kuei root; salvia root (*dan shen*); myrrh resin; frankincense gum; and licorice root,

taken at the rate of two to three tablets, three to four times a day, can be used with the above measures to reduce pain.

- Use a moxa stick to warm the painful area for 30 minutes each day for three consecutive days. If the client's skin becomes too warm, temporarily move the moxa stick to LI 4, ST 36, or points along the Liver channel, before returning to the affected area. Moxibustion is used to reduce pain and attack the virus.

## **Case Studies**

### **Case # 1**

Larry, a retired 79-year-old, had shingles with burning pain affecting the left side of his face and scalp. Because the pain was severe, he was being treated with Ativan, Darvocet and valproic acid. Larry was referred to our clinic by an acupuncturist who was able to control the pain for only short periods of time. Larry's pulse was irregular, and his tongue was reddish-purple and dry.

We recommended the heat formula (two tablets four times a day) to reduce toxic heat. We also suggested he take the dragon's blood formula internally (one-half dropperful four times a day), and that it be applied topically twice daily after washing his face with soap and water. After one week, Larry reported slightly less pain, but indicated he had developed diarrhea, which he believed was caused by the herbs. When we probed Larry, he admitted that the diarrhea could have been caused by some spoiled food he ate from a deli. Nevertheless, we added the isatis formula (two tablets four times a day) to his protocol, as it contains strengthening herbs that would counter the cooling nature of the heat formula in case it was the real cause of the diarrhea.

After three weeks, Larry came in unhappy about the number of pills he was taking and about the taste of the dragon's blood formula; however, he reported being able to cut back on the Darvocet, which helped him feel less drowsy. Over the next couple of months, as his pain and heat signs diminished, the heat formula was stopped. He remained on the dragon's blood formula another two months, and on the isatis formula for six months. When we followed up with him at this point, Larry indicated that his pain was much improved.

### **Case # 2**

Harold, 80, suffered from shingles following chemotherapy treatments for colon cancer. His pulse was sinking and rapid, and his tongue was scarlet.

We recommended the isatis formula (three tablets four times a day), and that he apply the dragon's blood formula topically to the affected parts of his body by massaging it into the area twice per day. He was also asked to take the dragon's blood formula internally (one-half dropperful four times a day). Within three weeks, Harold obtained substantial pain relief. He continued on the dragon's blood formula another two weeks before discontinuing it, and continued on the isatis formula for another six months. Harold reported no further outbreaks of shingles.

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