

Shingles is another name for a condition called "herpes zoster." It causes a painful rash. You can only get shingles if you had chickenpox in the past or if you have had the chickenpox vaccine ("shot").

After you have chickenpox (usually as a child), the virus that causes it stays in your body in certain nerve cells. Most of the time our immune system keeps the chickenpox virus in these cells.

As you get older, or if your immune system gets weak, the chickenpox virus may escape from the nerve cells and cause shingles.

So - no one can catch shingles from persons infected with chicken pox. But persons with shingles pass on chicken pox to those who haven't already had chickenpox or had the chickenpox vaccine. The chickenpox virus lives in the blisters from shingles, and the virus can be spread until the blisters are completely healed. A person with chicken pox or shingles should stay away from babies younger than 12 months and pregnant women.