A Deeper Look into Herpes Zoster

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In the United States, it is estimated that 1 in 3 people will develop shingles in their lifetime. The virus that causes shingles is varicella-zoster virus (VZV). Shingles is caused by reactivation of the dormant virus that causes chickenpox. Shingles can be painful and it is a risk for developing severe complications, such as herpes zoster ophthalmicus and meningitis. Treatment of shingles usually involves antiviral medication, and vaccine recommendations are in place to prevent it. Several factors can increase the risk of developing shingles, such as advancing age, immunosuppression, or certain medical conditions. Prophylactic use of corticosteroids can also be considered to prevent severe complications. The development of new treatments and vaccines aims to reduce the burden of shingles, its associated complications, and the cost to society. If you suspect you have shingles, see your healthcare provider for an accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment.