SOP Objective

To ensure that Healthcare Workers (HCWs) are aware of the actions and precautions necessary to minimise the risk of cross-infection and the importance of diagnosing patient’s clinical conditions promptly.

This SOP applies to all staff employed by NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde and locum staff on fixed term contracts and volunteer staff.

KEY CHANGES FROM THE PREVIOUS VERSION OF THIS SOP

Document Control Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Board Infection Control Committee 15th May 2017</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Related Documents</td>
<td>National Infection Prevention and Control Manual</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NHSGGC Hand Hygiene Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NHSGGC Chickenpox Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SOP Terminal Clean of Isolation Rooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SOP Twice Daily Clean of Isolation Rooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications of Race Equality and other diversity duties for this document</td>
<td>This policy must be implemented fairly and without prejudice whether on the grounds of race, gender, sexual orientation or religion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lead Manager</td>
<td>Board Infection Control Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible Director</td>
<td>Board Medical Director</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contents

1. Responsibilities.................................................................................................................................................. 3
2. General Information on Shingles ....................................................................................................................... 4
3. Transmission Based Precautions for Shingles in High-risk Areas................................................................. 5
4. Evidence Base....................................................................................................................................................... 7
1. Responsibilities

Healthcare Workers (HCWs) must:

- Follow this SOP.
- Inform a member of the Infection Prevention Control Team (IPCT) if this SOP cannot be followed.

Senior Charge Nurses (SCNs) / Managers must:

- Ensure that staff are aware of the content of this SOP.
- Support HCWs and IPCTs in following this SOP.

Infection Prevention Control Teams (IPCTs) must:

- Keep this SOP up-to-date.
- Provide education opportunities on this SOP.

Occupational Health Service (OHS)

- OHS must request and store information on staff immunity through the pre-employment health screen.
- Support staff screening during an investigation / outbreak.
2. General Information on Shingles

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<tr>
<th>Communicable Disease / Alert Organism /</th>
<th>Shingles - Herpes Zoster</th>
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</thead>
</table>

**Clinical Condition**

Shingles is a local manifestation of reactivation of latent (chickenpox) varicella zoster infection in the dorsal root ganglia. The rash is vesicular with an erythematous base and restricted to the skin areas supplied by sensory nerves. Severe pain and paraesthesiae (spontaneously occurring abnormal tingling sensation) are usually present. The symptoms are more severe and prolonged in the immunocompromised patient.

**Mode of Spread**

**Contact:** transfer of fluid from the vesicles to the mucous membrane of a susceptible individual usually via hands.

**Notifiable Disease**

No.

**Period of Communicability**

Until all the lesions are crusted.

**Persons most at risk of acquiring chickenpox from shingles**

Any person not immune to chickenpox (varicella). A history of chickenpox is considered adequate evidence of immunity. Non-immune and immunocompromised patients are at risk of more severe disease. A non-immune pregnant woman may become infected and this can be harmful to both mother and baby.

You cannot acquire shingles from a person with shingles but you can acquire chickenpox from a person with either chickenpox or shingles.

**High-risk**

Oncology, Haematology, Transplant Units, Maternity Units, Paediatric Wards. Any patients on steroids or immunosuppressive therapy. Patients identified with shingles in any of these high-risk areas then the IPCT / Consultant in Infectious Diseases and / or Ward Clinicians must assess other patients in the area.

The most up-to-date version of this policy can be viewed at the following website: [www.nhsggc.org.uk/your-health/public-health/infection-prevention-and-control/](http://www.nhsggc.org.uk/your-health/public-health/infection-prevention-and-control/)
### 3. Transmission Based Precautions for Shingles in High-risk Areas

| **Accommodation** (Patient Placement) | Patients do not need to be in a single room unless they are being nursed in a ‘high-risk’ area (i.e. an area with immuno-compromised patients, maternity, neonatal or paediatric ward) or unless lesions cannot be covered, in which case optimal placement is a single room irrespective of unit. In this case contact the IPCT for assistance. In some instances a patient with disseminated herpes zoster may require isolation precautions. Contact a member of the local IPCT for advice. |
| **Care Plan available** | No. |
| **Clinical Waste** | No special requirements. |
| **Contacts** | Refer any non-immune HCW who has had direct or indirect contact with vesicle fluid to the Occupational Health Service (OHS). |
| **Domestic Advice** | No special requirements unless patient is in isolation. See [SOP Twice Daily Clean of Isolation Rooms](#). |
| **Equipment** | No special requirements unless patient is in isolation. See [SOP Cleaning of Near Patient Equipment](#). |
| **Hand Hygiene** | Hand hygiene is the single most important measure to prevent cross-infection with Shingles. Hands must be decontaminated before and after each direct patient contact, after contact with the environment, after exposure to body fluids and before any aseptic tasks. Patients should be encouraged to carry out thorough hand hygiene. Please refer to [NHSGGC Hand Hygiene Policy](#). |
| **Linen** | Treat used linen as soiled/infected, i.e. place in an alginate bag then a clear bag tied and then into a laundry bag. (Brown polythene bag used in Mental Health areas) Please refer to [NHSGGC Laundry Policy](#). |
| **Moving between wards, hospitals and departments (including theatres)** | Ensure receiving ward / area is aware of the patient’s condition pre-transfer. |
| **Notice for Door** | Only if patient is isolated. |

The most up-to-date version of this policy can be viewed at the following website: [www.nhsggc.org.uk/your-health/public-health/infection-prevention-and-control/](http://www.nhsggc.org.uk/your-health/public-health/infection-prevention-and-control/)
**Patient Clothing**  
No special requirements.

**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**  
To prevent spread through direct contact PPE (disposable gloves and yellow apron) must be worn for all direct contact with the patient or the patient’s environment/equipment. A fit tested FFP3 mask is recommended if Aerosol Generating Procedures (AGP) are undertaken on a patient with shingles of the respiratory tract. See National Infection Prevention and Control Manual, Chapter 1.

**Precautions required until**  
If the patient is nursed in a ‘high-risk’ area they can be removed from isolation when all lesions are dry and crusted and no new lesions have appeared in the last 24 hours.

**Screening of Staff**  
Not required unless a significant exposure of vesicle fluid from the patient comes in contact with a mucous membrane of a person who is not immune or who is unaware of their immune status. If this occurs refer staff to OHS.

**Specimens Required**  
Generally, clinical diagnosis of zoster is obvious (if lesions are not vesicular patients are not infectious). Specimens are not normally required. Specimens of vesicle fluid or vesicle/ulcer swab in VPSS (Viral PCR Sample Solution) can be tested by PCR.

**Visitors**  
Visitors who have no history of chickenpox should be discouraged from visiting until the patient’s lesions are dry and crusted and no new lesions have appeared in the last 24 hours. Hand hygiene is recommended for visitors before entering and when leaving the patient’s room. Restrict visitors in paediatric wards to parents and carers.
4. Evidence Base

CDC (2011) Shingles
http://www.cdc.gov/shingles/hcp/HC-settings.html Shingles (Herpes Zoster)

2007 Guideline for Isolation Precautions: Preventing Transmission of Infectious Agents in Healthcare Settings

The Green Book (2013)
https://www.gov.uk/search?q=shingles&tab=government-results

National Infection Prevention and Control Manual