How to Relieve the Itch and Discomfort of Shingles and Chicken Pox

Recently we were asked about helping a family that had a child with shingles. The same virus that causes Chicken Pox - Herpes Zoster also known as the Varicella Zoster virus.

Typically shingles are only a problem with adults and most commonly occurs after the age of 40. Although shingles is very rare in children it can occur. Normally though they have already had Chicken pox. Which by the way, you can get more than once as a child or an adult, depending on the strength of your immune system.

Shingles is a very painful blistering rash, similar to Chicken pox but not with the little ‘spots’ that form. The breakout will normally follow an area of nerves or nerve bundles as that is where this virus likes to lay dormant. It is very common for these outbreaks to occur along the spinal column or other areas of the back. It is not limited to these areas and can be seen on legs, arms, the main trunk of the body and the face too.

If you have not seen a medical practitioner to be diagnosed, please be sure you know what you are dealing with. Do not self treat unless you know that indeed it is shingles. Let your health care provider know you would like to try essential oils as part of your regimen.

In any case, pain and itching are almost unbearable. There are several essential oils that can help relieve the itching and discomfort. Since many of these essential oils are also antiviral it will help to speed your recovery too.

You can take a bath in warm (not hot) water where you have added a few drops of Lavender and / or Tea Tree. Add a cup or two of Baking Soda too. If you can reach the area or have help you can also use cool compresses as needed. Again, using Lavender and Tea Tree or other essential oils from the list below. Use only a drop or two in the basin of water.

In aromatherapy articles written by aromatherapists, many of them suggested using, of course, Lavender but also Ravensara, Niaouli and Bergamot blended in purified water and used as a spritzer, as needed, to help relieve the pain and itching.

Another common suggestion with testimonials by several sufferers reporting it worked well was Ravensara mixed with Tamanu (Foraha) Oil and dabbed on the area. This mixture appears to not only relieve the itching but helps the lesions heal more quickly. If you choose to try this remember, you don’t need more than a 5% dilution of essential oils in the Tamanu.

Other essential oils besides those already listed that may be helpful for both itching and pain include German and Roman Chamomile, Eucalyptus globulus and Eucalyptus Citriodora, Lemon, Helichrysum, Spearmint, Peppermint (small amounts), Clove Bud, Oregano, Sage, Rose and Melissa.

For use on children older than 5 remember to use only half the amount in any blend you would use on an adult.

For children under 5 years old, limit the oils to Lavender, Tea Tree, Niaouli, German and Roman Chamomiles and again only in small amounts.

A quick and easy lotion can be made using Calamine Lotion, it is easy to make and use. It helps the itch, pain and dries the lesions quickly.

**Anti-itching lotion.**
Calamine Lotion - 8 ounces
Lavender - 25 drop
German Chamomile - 10 drops
Ravensara - 5 drops
Peppermint - 3 drops
Shake Well and apply to affected areas of skin as needed.

As you know, Calamine Lotion is the recommended lotion by most physicians along with Baking Soda baths prior to applying the lotion for Chicken Pox. Adding the essential oils will also help aid in the calming of the child or adult and of course to relieve itching and speed along the healing. When they or you don’t itch or are not in pain, you will sleep better to heal faster.

One note of caution: If there are Shingles lesions or rash on the face - DO NOT use essential oils even if diluted on the face. Shingles on the face needs to be addressed by your health care provider.

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