

Shingles

A disease that should be taken seriously.

The Risk

If you've had chickenpox (and more than 90% of adults in America have), you're at risk for Shingles.

Shingles is caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox. Once a person has had chickenpox, the virus can live, but remain inactive, in certain nerve roots within your body for many years. If it becomes active again, usually later in life, it can cause Shingles. The risk for Shingles increases as you get older. Shingles can affect anyone who has had chickenpox at any time, without warning. There's no way to tell who will get Shingles or when it may occur.

The Disease

The first signs of Shingles are often felt and may not be seen.

These can include: • itching • tingling • burning

A few days later a rash of fluid-filled blisters appears (usually on one side of the body or face). The blisters may take 2 to 4 weeks to heal.

Shingles can be painful and can cause serious problems.

For most people, the pain from the Shingles rash lessens as it heals. After the rash heals, however, Shingles may lead to pain that lasts for months or even years in some people. This long-term nerve pain, called postherpetic neuralgia or PHN, occurs because the virus that causes Shingles may damage certain nerves.

The pain can vary: • burning and throbbing • stabbing and shooting

For many people with long-term nerve pain, even the touch of soft clothing against the skin can be painful.

Other serious problems that may result from Shingles include skin infection, muscle weakness, scarring, and decrease or loss of vision or hearing.

The Age Factor

The older you get, the more you're at risk for Shingles.

This is because your body can't defend itself against the virus that causes Shingles as well as it could when you were younger.

- About half of the nearly 1 million Shingles cases in the United States each year occur in people 60 years and older.
- 1 out of 2 people who live to age 85 will have Shingles.
- The older you get, the longer the Shingles rash may last.

The older you get, the more you're at risk for long-term nerve pain.

Long-term nerve pain hurts more and lasts longer in older adults.

The Treatment

Talk to your doctor or healthcare professional immediately if you think you may have Shingles so that treatment may begin as soon as possible.

The Best Way to Learn More

Your doctor or healthcare professional can answer your questions about Shingles and whether you're at risk.



You can also learn more about Shingles at shinglesinfo.com.

