



Do you know your risk for Shingles?

About Shingles

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 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, scarring, and decrease or loss of vision or hearing if the eye or ear is affected.

The first signs of Shingles are often felt and may not be seen. These can include itching, tingling, and burning. A few days later a rash of fluid-filled blisters appears (usually in a specific area on one side of the body or face). The blisters may take 2 to 4 weeks to heal.

The Risk

Approximately 98% of adults in the United States have been infected with the chickenpox virus. Approximately 1 in 3 people will experience Shingles in their lifetime.

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 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 of 2 people who live to age 85 will have Shingles.
- The older you get, the more you're at risk for long-term nerve pain.

A health care provider can answer your questions about Shingles and whether you're at risk.



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