

SHINGLES (HERPES ZOSTER)

Shingles, also called herpes zoster, is a painful rash 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 the body. If it becomes active again, usually later in life, it can cause Shingles.

KEY FACTS

If you've had chickenpox, you can get Shingles at any time, without warning. There's no way to predict if you will get Shingles, or how severe your case could be.

It is estimated that 1 million cases of Shingles occur in the United States every year. Almost half of those cases occur in adults 60 years of age or older.

1 out of 2 people living to age 85 will have Shingles.

Anyone who had chickenpox is at risk for developing Shingles. Nearly all adults 9 out of 10 in the United States are at risk for Shingles.

RISK FACTORS

- Increasing age
- Having a weakened immune system caused by such things as cancer and certain drugs

HOW MANY PEOPLE GET SHINGLES?

It is estimated that in the United States, 1 million cases of Shingles occur every year. As you can see from the graph below, your risk of getting Shingles increases with age. Of those cases, almost half will occur in people 60 years of age or older. As the population ages, the number of cases of Shingles is likely to increase.

SYMPTOMS

Shingles is marked by a painful blistering rash that can appear anywhere on the body. Here's how it starts:

Before the rash develops, you may feel burning, itching, or tingling in the area where the rash will form. A few days later, a blistering rash appears on the skin. Typically, the rash will occur on only one side of your body.

The Shingles rash usually lasts for up to 30 days. For most people, the pain associated with the rash lessens as it heals. For some people, Shingles may lead to long-term pain that can last for months or even years. This is known as postherpetic neuralgia.