

# SPOTLIGHT ON SHINGLES

## Know What You Can Do

### What You Need to Know About Shingles.

#### Spotlight on Risk: What is Shingles? Who's at Risk?

- Shingles is a disease caused by the same virus that caused 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 the virus becomes active again, usually later in life, it can cause shingles.
- If you've had chickenpox (and more than 90 percent of adults in America have), you're at risk for shingles; also, the risk for shingles increases as you get older.
  - Up to half of the nearly 1 million shingles cases in the U.S. each year occur in people 60 years and older.
  - 1 out of 2 people who live to age 85 will have shingles.
- In fact, shingles can affect anyone who has had chickenpox at anytime, without warning; there is no way to tell who will get shingles or when it may occur.

#### Spotlight on Signs and Symptoms

- You may not be able to see the first signs of shingles, but you may feel them; the first signs of shingles may include: itching, tingling and burning.
- Within a few days, 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 rashes can be painful; for most people, the pain from shingles rash lessens as it heals.
- However, for some people, after the rash heals, shingles may lead to pain that can last for months or even years; this long-term nerve pain, called postherpetic neuralgia or PHN, occurs because the virus that causes shingles may damage certain nerves.
- The pain from postherpetic neuralgia can vary and may include: burning and throbbing, and stabbing and shooting; also, 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.
  - 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.

#### What Should I Do if I Think I Have Shingles?

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

If you are an older person and have had chickenpox, talk to a doctor or healthcare professional about your risk for shingles.



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To learn more about shingles and the *Spotlight on Shingles: Know what you can do* program, please visit [www.spotlightonshingles.com](http://www.spotlightonshingles.com). To request a free brochure, call toll-free 1-877-RISK-4-SHINGLES (1-877-747-5474).

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