

Shingles prevention and treatment




Americans
will develop shingles
(zoster or herpes zoster)


That's an estimated
1 million
cases per year (in the U.S.)

What is shingles?

Shingles is a painful skin rash that's usually concentrated on one side of your body or face. It typically develops in a stripe-like pattern on the skin, most often around the waist, chest, stomach or back. People often feel tired, run a fever or experience a tingling sensation two or three days before the symptoms appear. Then moderate to severe stinging or burning pain starts in the affected area, followed by light reddish patches of skin with small bumps.



Shingles is caused by the same virus as chickenpox (the Varicella Zoster virus), and anyone who has had chickenpox is at risk of developing shingles later in life.



Those bumps turn into itchy blisters that dry up and leave behind yellowish scabs. A shingles outbreak usually lasts two to four weeks. Unfortunately for some, the pain can last for months or years after the rash disappears – this is known as PHN (post-herpetic neuralgia), the most common complication of shingles.

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Who is most at risk?

You are more likely to develop shingles if you:

- Are age 60 or older
- Have recovered from chickenpox
- Have a condition that suppresses your immune system
- Receive immunosuppressive drugs
- Are undergoing chemotherapy
- Have received an organ transplant
- Have been diagnosed with HIV
- Pregnant women who have never had chickenpox or the chickenpox vaccine and premature or low birth weight babies are at higher risk of contracting the virus that causes chickenpox from someone with shingles.



Shingles is not contagious, but if a person comes into direct contact with fluid from the blisters caused by shingles, they can contract the varicella zoster virus and may develop chickenpox if they've never had chickenpox or never received the chickenpox vaccination. Once the rash develops crusts, the virus cannot be spread.

Learn more about shingles at: [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)

What should you do if you get shingles?

It's important to see your doctor immediately if you suspect you have shingles. In addition, you may:

- **Keep the area clean and covered** to avoid developing a secondary skin infection and spreading the virus to others.
- **Wash hands often and avoid touching the rash** to minimize scarring and to help prevent spreading the virus.
- **Use antiseptic or anti-itch lotions or cooling wraps** to minimize pain and itching.
- **Take over-the-counter pain medication**
- **Get plenty of rest** to reduce stress.
- **Stay away from those who may not be immune to chickenpox, have a weakened immune system or are pregnant.**
- **Ask your doctor about antiviral medicines** that could help shorten the length and severity of the illness if taken immediately.

About
50%
of all shingles cases occur in adults 60 years or older

The number one way to prevent shingles is to get vaccinated.

Healthy adults age 50 and older should get two doses of the Shingrix® vaccine two to six months apart, whether they've already had shingles or not.

Although Shingrix® is the preferred vaccine, an older vaccine called Zostavax® can be given to adults 60 or older if they are allergic to Shingrix®, if Shingrix® is unavailable or if they prefer the one-dose Zostavax® vaccine.

Two doses of Shingrix® is more than 90% effective at preventing shingles and PHN, and that protection stays above 85% for at least four years after receiving the vaccination.