

# Shingles can strike at any time.<sup>#</sup>

Here are some questions you can ask your doctor, practice nurse or pharmacist to get the conversation going:

1. I'm over 50 but I'm healthy and try to stay fit. Am I still at risk of shingles?
2. Am I at an increased risk of shingles? Why?
3. How is shingles different from chickenpox?
4. I've heard about the terrible impact of shingles pain, is it really that bad? How long does it last?
5. I haven't been around anyone with shingles, can I still get it?
6. I don't know anyone who's had shingles, how common is it?
7. I've already had shingles; can I get it again?

**Over 90% of people over 50 already carry the virus that causes shingles.\***

**Don't underestimate shingles. Talk to your doctor, practice nurse or pharmacist**



Visit [www.understandingshingles.ie](http://www.understandingshingles.ie) to learn more

All images are patient portrayals. Any information provided should be discussed with a healthcare professional and does not replace a healthcare professional's advice. For more information or for medical advice, please consult a healthcare professional.

\* Not everyone at risk will develop shingles.

# Shingles Virus can reactivate at any time if you had Chickenpox.

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# GSK

**"Shingles?  
I'm fit and healthy –  
I didn't think it would  
happen to me.  
I was in pain for weeks."<sup>\*\*†</sup>**

<sup>\*</sup>Inspired by real patient stories.

Patient portrayal.

<sup>†</sup> Shingles pain can last weeks or even months. Shingles symptoms may vary among patients.

# WHAT IS SHINGLES?

Shingles, or Herpes zoster, is characterised by blisters and sharp burning nerve pain in the skin caused by reactivation of the Varicella Zoster Virus (the virus that causes Chickenpox).

## SHINGLES RISK

In 1 out of 3 people, the dormant varicella zoster virus reactivates and causes shingles. The risk of this happening increases with age, particularly from the age of 50, due to ageing of the immune system. Those with a weakened immune system, due to an underlying illness or medicine, are at a further increased risk. Shingles is caused by a virus that you already carry, so you cannot protect yourself by social distancing.

No matter how healthy you feel, your immune system gets weaker as you age. This increases the risk of shingles especially if you are 50 years of age or older.

Those with long-term health conditions such as diabetes, asthma, cardiovascular disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and chronic renal disease have a degree of immunocompromise which could place them at increased risk of shingles. Shingles can have a severe impact on a person's health and quality of life, particularly for those with existing long-term conditions.

## SYMPTOMS OF SHINGLES

Shingles is typically a painful rash with blisters that form scabs within 7 to 10 days. It can take up to 4 weeks for the rash to heal. Usually, symptoms improve within weeks, however some patients suffer prolonged pain or other complications. The first signs of shingles can be a tingling or painful feeling in an area of skin, a headache or feeling generally unwell before the rash appears. Typically, a blistering rash may appear a few days later, usually on one side of the body only.\* The shingles rash most commonly appears on the chest or abdomen but can appear anywhere on the body including the face.

## WHAT ARE SOME COMMON COMPLICATIONS?

Shingles is a painful disease that can have serious and long-lasting complications. The most common complication is post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN) with severe pain in the healed area that can last for months or longer. PHN affects up to 20% of people over 50 years of age with shingles. The risk of PHN occurring is higher in those over 70 years and those who are immunocompromised. Other complications include scarring, ocular shingles, which may lead to serious eye complications and loss of vision, vascular and neurological complications. If you suffer from a chronic condition such as COPD or diabetes, shingles can negatively impact your underlying disease.

## CAN YOU GET SHINGLES MORE THAN ONCE?

Most people only experience shingles once but it's possible to get shingles again. This is most likely to happen if you are immunocompromised.

## TREATMENT

If you think you may have shingles, please speak with your healthcare professional as soon as possible. They may prescribe appropriate medicines to help reduce the severity and duration of your symptoms. If you have shingles around the eye area you may be advised to see an eye specialist to prevent or manage eye complications.

## GENERAL ADVICE FOR MANAGING SYMPTOMS:

- Keep the rash clean and dry to reduce the risk of infection
- Wear loose-fitting clothing
- Use a cool compress a few times a day

## FURTHER INFORMATION ON SHINGLES

Talk to your pharmacist, doctor or practice nurse for more information about shingles.

\* A rash on both sides of the body is not the usual presentation but can occur in patients who are immunocompromised.