

SHINGLES



Symptoms Of Shingles:

Shingles breaks out along certain body nerves causing a painful rash. It begins with headache, fever and general malaise followed by a tingling feeling on the skin which progresses to raised red spots on the skin. The rash follows nerves in the chest, back, arms and legs and some forms of the disease even affect the face.

As the disease progresses, the rash changes to small fluid-filled blisters (filled with chickenpox virus) which generally dry up and crust over in about ten days. Even after healing, the skin may continue to show signs of the rash and there still may be some residual pain. The rash usually heals within four weeks but the pain may last for months or even years afterwards. This pain is called *postherpetic neuralgia*.

Who gets shingles?

Anyone who has had chickenpox can potentially develop shingles. About one in four people will develop shingles in their lifetime and over half the shingles cases occurs in people over 60 years old who had chickenpox or were exposed to chickenpox as a child. Men and women are affected equally. But not everyone who had chickenpox gets shingles. It seems to be triggered by bouts of stress (psychological or physical). Also people being treated for cancer whose immune system may be weaker can get the disease. And simply the process of getting older can be a cause of shingles.

Shingles, also called herpes zoster, is a disease caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox. In children, once the chickenpox subsides, the virus remains dormant in the body usually without causing any symptoms. In a certain group of adults whose immune system is weaker, the virus can “wake up” later in life.

Note: If your case of shingles starts to involve the eye and face, it’s important to see an ophthalmologist as soon as possible. If untreated, the virus could cause permanent eye damage.

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