

Shingles

Shingles is a common disease which occurs in people who have previously had chicken pox, and although it can affect anyone, it occurs much more often in people aged over 60 years old.

What is Shingles?

Shingles is a painful skin condition. It usually appears as a skin rash, which may blister. It is caused by the chickenpox virus which stays in your nervous system. You can develop shingles if it becomes active again and attacks your nerves. You can develop shingles more than once.

Shingles isn't infectious, although if you have never had chicken pox you can catch it from someone who has shingles. It can be a very painful condition but can be treated with medication, so it's important to see your GP straight away.

Shingles symptoms

Shingles occurs when the immune system is weakened. There are various reasons why this might happen, for example:

- surgery
- cancer treatments
- physical or emotional stress
- infections or injuries
- ageing

The first symptoms of shingles are:

- a tingling or prickling sensation on the skin;
- pain, aching or numbness on **one** side of the body; and/or
- flu-like symptoms and a high temperature.

During these early stages, you may **not** have developed a rash. A rash or blisters on the skin appear some time within the first few days of illness.

More than a third of people who have shingles suffer from post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN). This is when the pain continues or returns three months after the shingles rash started and occurs when the nerves become permanently damaged. PHN can be treated but it is important to see your GP as soon as possible.

Shingles vaccine

The [shingles vaccination](#) can help reduce your chance of getting shingles. You can get a vaccination if you are:

- severely immunosuppressed aged 50 years
- turning 65 or 70 years of age

Contact your [GP](#) if you would like to be vaccinated against shingles.

Other useful information

[Shingles Support Society](#) has a confidential helpline and information packs available to buy for people about shingles, pain management and PHN.

[Find local support groups on InformationNOW](#)

[The Patient Information Centre](#) offers a range of health related information including;

- medical conditions
 - procedures and treatments
 - details about self help and support groups
 - information about complaints procedures
 - copies of leaflets
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Other Useful Organisations

- [NHS 111](#) is the new telephone service which has replaced NHS Direct. You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is a fast and easy way to get the right help, whatever the time.
- [NHS](#) online provides health and medical advice, an online symptom checker and a facility for searching for services near you.

Please note – The content on this website is provided for general information only, and should not be treated as a substitute for the medical advice of your own doctor or any other health care professional. If you are feeling unwell, make an appointment to see your GP or contact [NHS 111](#). In an emergency, dial **999**.

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Useful Organisations

Patient Information Centre – Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust (CNTW)

Website: www.cntw.nhs.uk

Telephone: 0191 246 7288

Address: St Nicholas Hospital, NE3 3XT

Shingles Support Society

Website: <https://shinglessupport.org.uk/>

Telephone: 020 7607 9661

Address: c/o HVA, N7 9DP

NHS

Website: www.nhs.uk

Telephone: 020 7607 9661

NHS 111

Website: www.nhs.uk/111

Telephone: 020 7607 9661

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