

Health Awareness

Shingles: What Every Adult Over 50 Should Know

(NAPSA)—If you've ever had shingles, you're not alone. Each year, 600,000 or more Americans are diagnosed with this condition, a painful skin disease caused by a reactivation of the chickenpox virus. Anyone who has had chickenpox is at risk for shingles, though people over age 50 are at greatest risk.

Now, information about shingles—how to recognize it and treat it—is only a mouse click away at www.nihseniorhealth.gov.

“Shingles is a major health problem in older adults. Launching this Web topic is an important step toward our goal of informing older adults about this debilitating disease,” says Anthony S. Fauci, M.D., director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), which developed the content for the shingles topic on the Web site. “Older Americans can turn to NIHSeniorHealth for accurate, helpful information about shingles diagnosis, treatment and research.”

The site has an interview with Sue Spicer, a Maryland woman who tells about her experience with shingles and how she deals with it. “Consult your doctors so that you can start treating it immediately and not with calamine lotion,” she advises. Fortunately, if treated early, shingles can be brought under control.

Symptoms

The outbreak of shingles usually begins with a burning, itching or tingling sensation on the back, chest or around the rib cage or



To learn more about the painful condition known as shingles, the National Institutes of Health studies the rDNA of the varicella zoster virus.

waist. It is also common for the face or eye area to be affected.

Some people report feeling feverish and weak during the early stages. Usually, within 48 to 72 hours, a red blotchy rash develops on the affected area. The rash erupts into small blisters that look like chickenpox. The blisters seem to arrive in waves over a period of three to five days.

Shingles can be quite painful. Many shingles patients say that it was the intense pain that ultimately sent them to the doctor. They often report that the sensation of anything brushing across the inflamed nerve endings on the skin is almost unbearable.

NIHSeniorHealth, a joint effort of the National Institute on

Ageing (NIA) and the National Library of Medicine (NLM), was designed especially with seniors in mind. The site is based on the latest research on cognition and aging. It features short, easy-to-read segments of information that can be accessed in a variety of formats, including various large-print type sizes, open-captioned videos and even an audio version. Additional topics coming soon to the site include problems with taste and smell, eye diseases, stroke and osteoporosis. The site links to MedlinePlus, NLM's premier, more-detailed site that links to consumer health information from the National Institutes of Health and other reliable sources.