

Shingles - A Personal Story

Shingles is a disease caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox. It is estimated that 98% of adults have been infected with the chicken pox virus and are at risk for Shingles. The older a person gets, the greater the risk of the disease.

I had shingles. I woke up on a Tuesday morning with three small red bumps resembling mosquito bites under my left breast. Disregarding them as bites, I went to work at Pharmacare of Frostburg as usual. By early afternoon, the bumps had spread and transformed into blisters and multiplied to my middle back. A sense of disbelief overtook me. How could I have shingles? I am a healthy, 56 year old, with a great family, wonderful job and a supportive social network.

A trip to my primary care provider confirmed my fears. I had shingles. What had started as a mild rash soon became a pathway of burning and itching. Sleep was impossible. Dressing was a problem. I had to wear clothing that was loose and nonrestrictive. Bras became a nightmare. I could not tolerate anything touching my skin.

It has been four weeks since I discovered the little bumps. Happily, the burning and itching are almost gone. I occasionally have shooting pains along the path of my rash, but that is subsiding too. A scar remains to mark the road that the shingles took halfway around my body. My energy level is slowly returning to its previous point.

My purpose for sharing my story with you is simply this: shingles can happen to anyone. Nearly one million people in the United States develop shingles each year. If you are 50 or over, talk to your doctor about Zostavax, the shingles vaccine. While not 100% of preventing shingles, it reduces your risk of developing the disease. It also decreases the risk of developing long term nerve pain called postherpetic neuralgia.

This article was submitted by Lisa Bohrer, R.N.,BC, the Community Health and Wellness Manager and Vaccine Specialist, for the PharmaCare Network. She is available to speak on various health and wellness topics. For more information, contact her at 301-689-2909 or lbohrer@3ipc.com.