

Most people over 50 in India unaware of shingles disease, despite being at risk

26 February 2025 | News

Survey data for Shingles Awareness Week 2025 renews call for further public health education on shingles and its impact



A new global survey shows that 56.6% of Indian participants aged 50 and above know little to nothing about shingles, although more than 90% of adults above 50 years have this virus in their body and are vulnerable.

Globally, only 44% of respondents had some familiarity with shingles. Launched at the start of Shingles Awareness Week (24 February – 2 March 2025), the survey findings highlight limited awareness of age-related health risks, particularly among individuals with pre-existing health conditions.

In India, 61% of survey participants reported living with chronic conditions such as diabetes, COPD, asthma, cardiovascular disease or chronic kidney disease. However, only 49.8% express significant concern about developing shingles. On a global level, 54% of participants had chronic conditions, but only 13% expressed significant concern about shingles.

Dr Shalini Menon, Medical Director at GSK India, said: “As we age, our natural ability to fight disease diminishes, making us more susceptible to various diseases like shingles. When ageing is combined with chronic conditions, this risk increases. Yet, the survey reveals that a significant portion of people over 50 remain unaware of these risks, which is concerning. It is essential for ageing people to understand the impact of ageing on their health, recognise these risks and adopt preventive measures. This includes maintaining a healthy diet, engaging in regular exercise, recognising symptoms early, undergoing timely health screenings, and discussing vaccination options with their healthcare providers. By fostering early awareness and taking proactive steps, we can significantly improve long-term health outcomes for our ageing population.”

The survey also revealed a notable contrast in health awareness and behaviour among Indians aged 50 and above. While more than half (55.7%) of respondents in this age group feel younger than their actual age, with 24% feeling a decade younger, only 25% are very aware of age-related diseases and take proactive steps to limit the impact. This gap between perceived health and actual health management highlights a concerning trend, as the lack of proactive care may increase vulnerability to age-related conditions, including infectious diseases such as shingles. It underscores the urgent need for greater awareness and action to promote healthy ageing practices. The International Federation on Ageing (IFA) has also

emphasised the importance of those aged 50 and above actively monitoring their health and well-being, especially as their immune systems naturally weaken with age.