

# HARD *at* WORK

**S**everal years ago, while rehearsing a play that she would take on tour across several cities in her native Mexico, Jacqueline Andere felt something that at the time was new to her. “The pain was really intense. Oh, God! How can it [turn into] something so awful?” recalls the legendary actress, 85. “It hit me on half of my head, and the pain was hellish.”

Besides being a standout on the stage, Andere is a veteran telenovela star who has never stopped working. And she wasn't going to allow pain to keep her away from her public, no matter how intense it felt. The mother of Chantal Andere—also an actress—has always said that as long as there are roles for women her age, she wants to keep acting as long as her body allows it. The pain she experienced, however, was her body's way warning her something was up. “It was intense, so I went to the doctor and told him that I felt bad and was about to leave on a trip. I told him, “I have a terrible headache, but the symptoms are bizarre. I don't understand what's happening to me,” says the actress in an exclusive interview with *People en Español*. “I can't even touch a single hair because of the pain.”

Her doctor suspected what Andere couldn't imagine: those symptoms pointed to a shingles diagnosis. “I told him what I was feeling and that the left side of my head was swollen. And he told me, “This is herpes zoster, so I'm going to give you a prescription. And start taking the medicine immediately.’ But wouldn't you know, [the pain] didn't go away [even with medicine],” says the actress who last year starred as Nuria de Montes in the new version of the classic telenovela *El*

**LEADING MEXICAN ACTRESS  
JACQUELINE ANDERE SHARES  
HER TERRIBLE ORDEAL WITH  
SHINGLES, WHICH DIDN'T  
KEEP HER AWAY FROM THE  
STAGE, AND HOW SHE HAS  
LEARNED TO FIGHT IT WHEN  
THE SYMPTOMS THREATEN  
TO RETURN**

By **MIGUEL SIRGADO** • Photos by **KIKA FLORES**



“It was awful; plus, I was rehearsing a play because I was about to go on tour, recalls Mexican actress Jacqueline Andere of a bout of shingles she suffered years ago.



Above, Jacqueline Andere, Augusto Benedico and Silvia Pinal in *The Exterminating Angel* (1962), by Luis Buñuel, one of the 100 best films according to *The New York Times*. Left, Andere played Leonor de Montesinos in *Soy tu dueña* (2010), produced by the late Nicandro Díaz.

*maleficio*, in the role of Nuria de Montes.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), shingles, or herpes zoster, is a painful, usually itchy rash that can appear on different parts of the body. The rash consists of blisters that normally scab over in 7 to 10 days and disappear in 2 to 4 weeks. But Andere, who is just as strong as the characters she portrays, moved ahead with the play, a comedy that she doesn't remember much about because "I erase everything bad from my mind." So, the actress kept working despite the pain. "It went on like that for at least a month or a month and a half. Even so, I went on tour, I rehearsed slowly, calmly. But with that pain that would not go away."

Andere, whose film and TV career began in

the 1950s, also says the medicines she was prescribed helped her because "otherwise, well, I couldn't have gone on [stage]." Andere, who played a princess on Enrique Alonso's children's show *Teatro fantástico* (1955) and debuted on the big screen in Benito Alazraki's *El vestido de novia* (1959), speaks of what it took to keep working. "I felt like I was working twice as hard because with all that medicine... I had to do it while halfway drugged, you know?" Andere says.

Dr. José G. Lampreabe, a primary care physician at Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami, explains that "the chickenpox virus is the root" of herpes zoster. "When you're a child, it's very minor; when you're an adult, things are a little more complicated." Once the chickenpox subsides, the doctor says, the virus retreats to some of the nerves inside the human body. "There's no way to know which one, but it hides in the nervous system and immunizes you, so it doesn't come out again." Over time, when the virus is activated, shingles appears on one side of the body. "It starts from the midline of the body and follows the path of the nerve. If it crosses the midline, it's not shingles. It's something else," Lampreabe says. "It can affect the torso, the neck or an arm. If it affects the face, it's dangerous because it can affect the



"The symptoms are very strange, Andere says about shingles. "You're like, 'Something is happening to me, but I don't know what."

optic or the auditory nerves, and in both cases there is a risk of being left blind or with vision loss, or deaf or with hearing loss."

Andere says that in her case, shingles might have been brought on by stress. "My theory is that this happens because you're under a lot of pressure, with a lot of worries. When you have to face something at work or even the possibility of being without work," says the actress. As Dr. Lampreabe explains it, the fact is that the immune system becomes less efficient over time. "Whether from age or from an illness like cancer or pneumonia, or just stress—situations that can lead to a depressed immune system—that's what allows the virus to reactivate," says Lampreabe. In his opinion, the most effective treatment for herpes zoster is prevention. "There is a vaccine that has been approved in the U.S. for people over 50," he says. "It's very effective." At the same time, he says there are several medications that can treat shingles effectively, especially when given in the first 72 hours after an outbreak.

For now, Andere is all too familiar with the signals her body sends her when for whatever reason she feels an attack of shingles is coming on. The difference is that now she knows what's happening, so it doesn't frighten her as much. "If I feel nervous, sometimes it starts to itch, but it doesn't go beyond that... Maybe a little irritation, but no pain. Now I know that it's just the aftereffect that I was left with, so I stay calm and don't stress out because I don't think I'm going to get it again. At least I hope not!" ◀



FAST FACT

1%-4%

of people with herpes zoster are hospitalized for complications, according to the CDC.