

SCHIZOPHRENIA: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW



What is schizophrenia?

- It is a brain disorder that keeps you from thinking clearly.
- It is a biological illness and not anyone's fault.
- It can cause you to see or hear things that are not there.
- Most people with this condition need to stay on antipsychotic medication for the rest of their lives.

Who gets schizophrenia?

- It affects people from all cultures.
- It can start at any age, but usually begins in late teenage years or the early 20s.
- It is equally common in men and women.

How can I tell if I have schizophrenia?

- There is no test to diagnose schizophrenia.
- Health care providers can tell if you have it by learning about you and your symptoms during a medical visit.

What are the symptoms of schizophrenia?

- Hallucinations – when you hear, see, feel, smell, or taste things that are not there
- Delusions – when you believe things that are not true
- Disorganized thinking or speech – when you have trouble thinking in an organized way or when you make up words or say things that do not make any sense
- Not showing much emotion or not changing your facial expression
- Not moving or talking much
- Not keeping clean or taking showers
- Not having much interest in having fun or spending time with people
- Trouble learning and remembering
- Anxiety or depression are common with schizophrenia

How is schizophrenia treated?

- Schizophrenia is treated with a combination of medications, supportive therapy and programs.

When should I contact health care staff?

- Any time you have concerns or questions about how you are feeling.
- If you get muscle stiffness or fever or you have trouble thinking clearly.
- It is especially important to contact the team if you are:
 - Hearing voices that are telling you to hurt yourself or others
 - Feeling the urge to hurt yourself or others
 - Feeling hopeless or overwhelmed
 - Seeing things that are not really there
 - Unable to care for yourself
- If you are having troublesome medication side effects.

SCHIZOPHRENIA: WHAT YOU SHOULD DO



Regularly take your medications

- Take your medication as prescribed by your doctor.
- Never just stop your treatment.
- If you are having side effects, talk to your doctor about them.
- Some side effects improve with time and occasionally a change in medication is needed.



Report changes in symptoms

- If you feel that your medication is not working or if you start feeling anxious or confused, talk to health care staff.
- If you are feeling low or depressed, it is important to share this with your therapist.
- Patients with schizophrenia have a higher risk for suicide.
- If you are feeling hopeless, overwhelmed, or have thoughts or urges to hurt yourself, contact any health care or custody staff immediately.



Participate in supportive therapy

- Your Mental Health providers will usually meet with you one on one to help you learn about your illness and help you develop better coping skills.
- Group therapy can often help you gain more coping skills and give you support from others who understand what you are going through.
- When possible, talking to a family member, religious or spiritual leader, or a friend can help you feel supported.



Learn relaxation and stress management

- Stress reduction techniques (e.g., regular exercise, meditation) can help you cope.

