

Schizophrenia

What is Schizophrenia?

Schizophrenia is a serious mental health condition that can interfere with a person's daily life, including working, playing and interpersonal relationships. It may be characterized by the experience of delusions, hallucinations and/or disorganized thought, speech and behavior. With treatment, 60 percent of people diagnosed with Schizophrenia show significant improvement, according to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). As described below, treatment, especially early treatment, can be very effective to help people recover and to work, attend school, and enjoy relationships.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), Schizophrenia affects 1% of all Americans (NIMH). There is no difference in the number of men and women impacted by Schizophrenia, which usually develops during late adolescence or early adulthood (ages 16-30). Children can experience Schizophrenia, but it is not common.

A person diagnosed with Schizophrenia may experience some or all of the following:

- Difficulty distinguishing between what is real and what is not real
- Hallucinations - hearing or seeing things that are not really there
- Hearing voices that are frightening
- Hearing voices which give directions such as to harm oneself or others.
- Delusions - believing others seek to harm or control their thoughts

People who experience Schizophrenia may think and speak in very confused ways. They may have trouble concentrating or making decisions. They may also behave in odd unusual ways that frighten or concern other people.

A person diagnosed with Schizophrenia may have some or all of these experiences. It is important to have a thorough medical examination to rule out other possible causes of their symptoms. To be diagnosed as Schizophrenia, psychotic symptoms that are not caused by other problems (such as medical problems or drug use) must persist for for six months.

Stigma remains an obstacle to seeking help, which can be very effective.

What causes Schizophrenia?

There is no known single cause of Schizophrenia. Scientists do not yet fully understand how the condition develops. Researchers are exploring how genes, the chemistry of the brain, and personal experiences, including trauma, affect the development of Schizophrenia.

Schizophrenia seems to run in families. A child who has a parent diagnosed with Schizophrenia has about a 10% chance of also being diagnosed with the illness at some point in their life (NIMH).

How can Schizophrenia be treated?

Treatments can successfully reduce or eliminate the symptoms of Schizophrenia and allow people to live meaningful lives, enjoying work, school, and personal relationships. The treatment of Schizophrenia may include a combination of medication, therapy and supportive, educational and rehabilitative services. Early intervention is found to have higher rates of improvement so seeking help at the first signs can be important.

Additional Information About Schizophrenia

[National Institute of Mental Health](#)

NIMH is an agency of the United States government. This site has clear information about mental health conditions and provides information on how individuals and family members can recognize symptoms and get the help they need.

[National Alliance for the Mentally Ill \(NAMI\)](#)

NAMI is a very respected grass roots family movement which began over 20 years ago. It does effective self-help and advocacy for people with mental illnesses, including Schizophrenia. This site gives a short, easy-to-read description of Schizophrenia and effective treatments.

[Mental Health America \(MHA\)](#)

NMHA is a national organization dedicated to promoting mental health through education and advocacy. This site gives basic information about the symptoms and types of Schizophrenia.