

Schizophrenia

What is Schizophrenia?

Schizophrenia is a brain disorder. It affects the way people see the world. They may hear or see things that are not there. They may have lost touch with reality which affects their ability to think.

Some symptoms are things you would not see in those without a mental health condition and some symptoms interrupt emotions and behaviors. Without treatment, schizophrenia can cause problems in jobs and relationships. It also can lead to alcohol and drug abuse and a higher risk of suicide.

Symptoms

These early warning signs may appear in individuals between ages 16-30:

- Socially withdrawn.
- Hostile or distrusting.
- Not showering or brushing teeth.
- Blank stare or gaze.
- Cannot cry or show joy.
- Laughter or crying at the wrong time.
- Depression.
- Oversleeping or cannot sleep at all.
- Weird or irrational statements.
- Forgetful - can't concentrate.
- Severe reaction to criticism.
- Speaking in a way that does not make sense.
- Talking to people or things that are not there.

Causes

Studies show schizophrenia is known to run in families. Persons who have a parent, sister or brother with the illness have a 10 percent chance of getting the disorder. However, factors such as high levels of stress or trauma may also be a possible trigger for schizophrenia.

Treatment

Recovery is a lifelong process. Although there is no cure, the illness is treatable. The first step is getting the right diagnosis. Treatment may include medicine and therapy. These tips may help in getting the best treatment:

1. Don't believe the myth that you can't get better. Treatment works best when you, your doctor and your family work together.
2. Talk to your doctor. Make sure you are getting the right amount of medicine. Let him or her know if symptoms get worse.
3. You may need more than medicine. You may need support through therapy that confronts delusions and hallucinations. This teaches you how to ignore voices in your head and helps you not relapse.

Set realistic goals for yourself. You can still work and have a productive life with schizophrenia.

Where can I go for help?

- Call the National Alliance on Mental Illness: 1-800-950-6264
- Call the Mental Health Association: 1-800-969-6642