

# Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is a serious mental illness that:

- Affects how a person thinks, feels, and behaves
- Can cause someone to feel like they have lost touch with reality
- If left untreated, can result in persistent and disabling symptoms
- Can be treated and help affected individuals:
  - Achieve independence
  - Engage in school or work
  - Enjoy personal relationships

## Onswet

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, schizophrenia:<sup>1</sup>

- Is typically diagnosed in the late teen years to the early 30s
- Tends to emerge earlier in males (late adolescence – early 20s) than females (early 20s – early 30s)
- Can occur in younger children, but is rare to occur before late adolescence

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- A diagnosis of schizophrenia often follows the first episode of psychosis, when individuals first display symptoms of schizophrenia.

## Symptoms

The symptoms of schizophrenia generally fall into the following 3 categories:

### Psychotic symptoms

Include:

- Altered perceptions (e.g., changes in vision, hearing, smell, touch, and taste)
- Abnormal thinking
- Experiencing themselves and the world in a distorted way
- Loss of a shared sense of reality
- Odd behaviors

Specifically, individuals typically experience:

- Hallucinations, such as hearing voices or seeing things that aren't there
- Delusions, which are firmly held beliefs not supported by objective facts (e.g., paranoia—irrational fears that others are “out to get you” or believing that the television, radio, or internet are broadcasting special messages that require some response)
- Thought disorder, which includes unusual thinking or disorganized speech

### **Negative symptoms**

Include:

- Difficulty functioning normally
- Disinterest or lack of enjoyment in daily activities
- Difficulty showing emotions
- Loss of motivation
- Social withdrawal

Specifically, individuals typically have:

- Diminished feelings of pleasure in everyday life
- A “flat affect,” or reduced expression of emotions via facial expression or voice tone
- Reduced motivation and difficulty planning, beginning, and sustaining activities

### **Cognitive symptoms**

Include:

- Problems with attention, concentration, and memory
- Interference with activities like following conversations, learning new things, or remembering appointments

Specifically, individuals typically experience:

- Difficulty processing information to make decisions
- Problems using information immediately after learning it
- Trouble focusing or paying attention

### **Risk factors**

Several factors contribute to the risk of developing schizophrenia, including:

- Brain structure and function
- Environment
- Genetics

### **Treatments and therapies**

Current treatments focus on managing symptoms and solving problems related to day-to-day functioning.

Treatments include:

- Antipsychotic medications
- Assertive community treatment
- Coordinated specialty care
- Family education and support
- Psychosocial treatments

## Helping someone with schizophrenia

Caring for and supporting a loved one with schizophrenia can be:

- Challenging
- Difficult, especially when the person is experiencing psychosis

To help:

- Be respectful, supportive, and kind without tolerating dangerous or inappropriate behavior
- Check to see if there are any support groups in your area
- Encourage them to get and stay in treatment
- Remember that their beliefs or hallucinations seem very real to them
- Tell them that you acknowledge that everyone has the right to see things their way

Some symptoms require immediate emergency care. If your loved one is thinking about harming themselves or others or attempting suicide, seek help right away:

- Call **911** or go to the nearest emergency room (ER)
- Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **800-273-TALK (8255)**
- Text the Crisis Text Line (**HELLO to 741741**).



### Source

1. "Schizophrenia," National Institute of Mental Health, last accessed October 20, 2021, <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/schizophrenia/index.shtml>.

## Call If You Need Us

If you have questions or need help reading or understanding this document, call us at **800-480-1825 (TTY: 711)**. We are available Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Eastern time. We can help you at no cost to you. We can explain the document in English or in your first language. We can also help you if you need help seeing or hearing. Please refer to your Member Handbook regarding your rights.

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- You can also file a civil rights complaint with the  
**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights**  
electronically through their Complaint Portal, available at  
<https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf>, or at **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**, 200 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 509F, HHH Building, Washington, DC 20201, **800-368-1019, 800-537-7697 (TDD)**. Complaint forms are available at <https://www.hhs.gov/ocr/office/file/index.html>.

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**English:** Call the number above to receive free language assistance services.

**Español (Spanish):** Llame al número que se indica arriba para recibir servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística.

**繁體中文 (Chinese):** 您可以撥打上面的電話號碼以獲得免費的語言協助服務。

**Tiếng Việt (Vietnamese):** Gọi số điện thoại ở trên để nhận các dịch vụ hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ miễn phí.

**한국어 (Korean):** 무료 언어 지원 서비스를 받으려면 위 번호로 전화하십시오.

**Tagalog (Tagalog – Filipino):** Tawagan ang numero sa itaas para makatanggap ng mga libreng serbisyo sa tulong sa wika.

**Русский (Russian):** Позвоните по вышеуказанному номеру, чтобы получить бесплатную языковую поддержку.

**Kreyòl Ayisyen (French Creole):** Rele nimewo ki endike anwo a pou resevwa sèvis éd gratis nan lang.

**Français (French):** Appelez le numéro ci-dessus pour recevoir des services gratuits d'assistance linguistique.

**Polski (Polish):** Aby skorzystać z bezpłatnej pomocy językowej, należy zadzwonić pod wyżej podany numer.

**Português (Portuguese):** Ligue para o número acima para receber serviços gratuitos de assistência no idioma.

**Italiano (Italian):** Chiamare il numero sopra indicato per ricevere servizi di assistenza linguistica gratuiti.

**Deutsch (German):** Wählen Sie die oben angegebene Nummer, um kostenlose sprachliche Hilfsdienstleistungen zu erhalten.

**日本語 (Japanese):** 無料の言語支援サービスを受けるには、上記の番号までお電話ください。

**Diné Bizaad (Navajo):** Wódaḥí béésh bee hani'í bee wolta'ígíí bich'í' hódíílnih éí bee t'áá jik'eh saad bee áká'ánída'áwo'déé nika'adoowol.

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