



What is the outcome?

The course of schizophrenia varies from one person to another. It is a chronic illness and complete cure (i.e. no need to take medication) is rare. About 25% of people with the illness have complete remissions, about 10% remain severely psychotic, and others are left with minor residual symptoms or alternate between impairment and acute psychotic lapses. There are enormous variables that affect the outcome of the illness, such as functioning before the onset of the illness, type of symptoms, familial and sociocultural context.

What can a person with schizophrenia do to manage his/her illness?

- Comply with medication or other forms of treatment
- Learn about their illness
- Monitor his/her mental condition
- Participate in day programs and skill development programs
- Join a peer support group
- Strive for recovery
- Have hope

What can families and friends do to help?

- Learn about the illness
- Help the person with schizophrenia find appropriate treatment
- Cooperate with professionals (such as doctor, social worker) offering treatment
- Learn to recognize warning signs of relapse
- Learn to handle crisis
- Understand the ill person and set appropriate expectations
- Attend a family support group
- Take care of themselves and learn to manage their stress

Where do you get help when you think that you or your family member appear to have schizophrenia?

- Ask your family doctor to refer you for help.
- Approach social services and health agencies for information and support
- Contact the Metro Integrated Community Crisis Program at (416) 289-2434 when in a crisis situation
- Contact nearby emergency departments

Contact Info:



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Schizophrenia is a serious, but treatable brain disorder. It is the most common of all the psychotic illnesses and occurs in all cultures. One in 100 people will be diagnosed with schizophrenia at some time in their lives. Schizophrenia is thought to have a biological basis and the illness probably develops from interactions between a person's physical predisposition and the psychosocial stressors they experience.



What are the symptoms of schizophrenia?

Schizophrenia affects the way people think and perceive the world around them, which in turn affects the way they think and behave. Symptoms of schizophrenia can be divided into three categories: negative symptoms, disorganized symptoms, and positive symptoms. Not everyone with schizophrenia will have all of these symptoms, and there can be other reasons for these symptoms to be present.

1. Negative symptoms:

- symptoms:** A lack of certain characteristics that should be there. These are often the first symptoms of schizophrenia to develop. Diagnosis at this stage can lead to early treatment and better recovery. These symptoms can interfere significantly with a person's functioning.
- Flat/blunted emotions:** Difficulty expressing emotions clearly. A person may speak in a monotone or show little expression on their face.
- Lack of motivation/energy:** Low energy level, trouble starting projects or following through with things, possibly needing reminders to do simple things like taking a bath or changing clothes.
- Lack of interest:** Lack of pleasure or interest in things and in some cases the feeling that it is not worth the effort to get out and do things.
- Limited speech:** Brief speech with limited content. A person could have trouble carrying on a continuous conversation or saying anything new.

2. Disorganized symptoms:

- Disrupted thought and speech:** Trouble communicating in coherent sentences or carrying on a conversation.
- Difficulty with concentration:** Inability to concentrate or follow a conversation. Difficulty understanding or carrying out simple instructions. Poor memory.
- Altered perceptions:** Perceptions of what is going on around a person may be distorted so that ordinary things appear distracting or frightening. A person may be extra sensitive to background noises and colors and shapes.

3. Positive symptoms:

- symptoms:** Presence of certain characteristics that should not be there. They are sometimes called psychotic symptoms because the patient has lost touch with reality in certain important ways.
- Some of the positive symptoms are:
 - Delusions:** These are false beliefs that are firmly held by the person, but not by other people, as they have no basis in reality.
 - Hallucinations:** Hearing, seeing, smelling, or feeling things that are not there.
 - Paranoia:** Excessive fear or suspicion that people are out to get them, or are plotting against them.



Discovering the illness

Schizophrenia usually develops in the teenage years or during early adulthood. At first the person experiences changes that may be observed by their relatives and friends. In some people these changes happen slowly, and in others are very sudden.

Changes may include trouble sleeping, suspicion, fear, and decrease in general functioning (e.g. having problems in studying, keeping a job, taking care of themselves and relating with others). Things like school stress at school or a relationship breakdown do not cause the illness, but they can trigger a psychotic episode in someone who is predisposed to schizophrenia.



How is schizophrenia treated?

The primary form of treatment for schizophrenia is medication, which helps to control the symptoms. The symptoms can come and go, and when they are most severe, more intense treatments may be required, such as hospitalization. When the symptoms are mostly controlled, maintenance treatment is continued on a long term basis to improve functioning and prevent future psychotic episodes. The person may or may not have persistent symptoms during this phase of maintenance treatment.

Successful treatment involves the use of medication, psychotherapy and rehabilitation.

- Anti-psychotic medication:** Medication is necessary in both the acute and maintenance treatment phases. During the acute phase, medications help relieve the acute psychotic symptoms. After the acute phase, ongoing anti-psychotic medication greatly reduces the chance of relapse. Medication may cause side effects. It is important to discuss medication with the doctor who prescribes it.
- Psychotherapy:** It helps persons with schizophrenia learn about their illness and develop coping skills, and have emotional support.
- Psychosocial rehabilitation:** It aims to enhance the abilities of persons with mental illness in their daily living.