

UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING SCHIZOPHRENIA

What is Schizophrenia?

Schizophrenia is a treatable mental health condition that affects how a person thinks, feels, and perceives reality. With proper treatment and support, many people with schizophrenia lead fulfilling, productive lives.

Common Symptoms

Positive Symptoms (experiences added to reality):

- Hallucinations (seeing, hearing, or feeling things others don't)
- Delusions (strong beliefs not based in reality)
- Disorganized thinking or speech

Negative Symptoms (reduction in normal functions):

- Reduced emotional expression or motivation
- Difficulty experiencing pleasure
- Decreased speech or social withdrawal

Cognitive Symptoms:

- Trouble with attention, memory, or decision-making

Daily Management Strategies

Take Medication as Prescribed: This is the foundation of managing schizophrenia. Never stop or change medication without talking to your doctor, even if you feel better.

Maintain a Routine: Keep regular sleep/wake times, plan daily activities, create structure in your day

Recognize Early Warning Signs: Learn your personal triggers and early symptoms of relapse (changes in sleep, increased suspiciousness, social withdrawal, trouble concentrating)

Stay Connected: Maintain relationships with supportive family/friends, attend support groups, communicate with your treatment team

Avoid Substances: Alcohol and drugs (including marijuana) can worsen symptoms and interfere with medication

Manage Stress: Practice relaxation techniques, break tasks into smaller steps, ask for help when needed

Stay Active: Regular exercise improves mood, sleep, and overall health—aim for 30 minutes most days

Healthy Living: Eat regular nutritious meals, maintain good sleep hygiene, attend all medical appointments

Working with Your Treatment Team

- Be honest about symptoms, medication side effects, and substance use
- Ask questions if you don't understand something
- Discuss any concerns about your treatment
- Create a relapse prevention plan together
- Keep all scheduled appointments

Treatment Options

Medication: Antipsychotic medications help manage symptoms and prevent relapse

Therapy: Individual therapy, family therapy, and cognitive behavioral therapy can help with coping skills

Support Services: Case management, vocational rehab, supported housing, peer support groups

Coordinated Care: Working with psychiatrists, therapists, and other providers as a team

Warning Signs to Report

Contact your provider immediately if you notice:

- Symptoms getting worse or new symptoms appearing
- Thoughts of harming yourself or others
- Medication side effects that concern you
- Increased difficulty with daily functioning
- Stopping or missing medications

Family and Caregiver Support

- Educate yourself about schizophrenia
- Encourage treatment adherence
- Support without enabling

Resources

Crisis/Support: 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (call or text) • Text HOME to 741741 • **Emergency:** 911 • **Support:** NAMI Helpline 1-800-950-6264

This tip sheet is for educational purposes. Always consult your healthcare provider about your specific treatment plan.