

# WHAT IS SCHIZOPHRENIA?

Mental health has to do with your feelings, thoughts, and social well-being. It can change how we:

- Think, feel and act
- Relate to others
- Handle stress
- Make choices



## What is schizophrenia?

- Schizophrenia is a mental illness that changes how a person thinks, feels, and acts. Schizophrenia often involves what appears to be a loss of being in touch with reality. It can be quite scary to the person and their family and friends.
- Symptoms of schizophrenia can be hallucinations and delusions, losing interest in self-care and social activities, and problems with attention, focus, and memory.

## Are persons with schizophrenia violent?

- People with schizophrenia are sometimes viewed as unsafe and even violent. In fact, most people with schizophrenia are not violent. They are more likely to be the victims of violence than to hurt some other person. If a person with schizophrenia threatens self-harm or to hurt some other person, it is important to be supportive and get them to help right away.
- Anti-psychotic medications are available which can help. These medications may get rid of or lessen psychotic symptoms like hallucinations and delusions and increase a person's interest in normal daily and social activities. Anti-psychotic medications may have side effects such as drowsiness or weight gain. It's important for people to talk with their health care provider about any side effects.
- There are a number of treatments and services to help people with schizophrenia including cognitive behavioral therapy, case management, supported employment, and specialized social groups.

## What can I do to cope with schizophrenia?

- Work with a mental health therapist to make a Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) which helps people to find steps to cope with symptoms.
- Take medications as prescribed and talk with your health care provider about any concerns or side effects.
- Workout and eat a healthy diet. Avoid alcohol and drugs which are not prescribed.
- Join a support group.
- Learn about schizophrenia and find help. The National Alliance on Mental Illness is a great place to start.

## What else is important for treatment?

- Families and close friends have an important role to play in helping the person with schizophrenia. They may help the person know when they need to see a health care provider and they also may be able to take action if the person doesn't realize that they have symptoms. Most importantly, friends and families help lessen social isolation and give support that can keep help handle the illness.

## How can I tell if I'm having an emergency?

A warning sign is your body's way of telling us something could be wrong. Below are warning signs that mean you should call your doctor right away or call 9-1-1:

- Thoughts of hurting yourself or others
- Loss of interest that jeopardizes your health and well-being, e.g. not eating.

## If you ever need help or have questions and cannot reach your doctor, you can also call:

- The Passport Behavioral Health Crisis Line at (844) 800-5154
- The Nurse Advise Line at (800) 606-9880

If you are thinking about hurting yourself, there are people who can help you 24/7. Call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988.

**If you need help finding a doctor or finding treatment, we can help! Please call us at (800) 578-0603 (TTY: 711).**

Sources:

What is Schizophrenia? | SAMHSA

NIMH » Schizophrenia (nih.gov)

Home | NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness



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