

# SCHIZOPHRENIA



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## What Is Schizophrenia?

Schizophrenia is a brain disease that interferes with your ability to think clearly, manage your emotions, make decisions and relate to other people.

Although the symptoms of schizophrenia can often make it difficult to participate in every day activities, effective treatments are available.

## What Are the Symptoms of Schizophrenia?

The symptoms of schizophrenia can vary among people affected with the disease, but the following are three main categories:<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Psychotic or “positive” symptoms.

These are called positive symptoms because they involve the addition of experiences that are not typically present in the general population.

- **Hallucinations** – Sensory experiences in the absence of any input from the real world, including hearing, seeing, feeling or tasting things that aren’t there, such as hearing voices.
- **Delusions** – Strongly believing in something that’s not true, such as falsely thinking

someone is trying to hurt you and beliefs that you have supernatural powers.

- **Thought disorganization** – Challenges with thinking and speaking logically, and using made-up words.

### 2. Negative symptoms.

These are called negative symptoms because they involve the absence of experiences that are typically present in the general population. These can include:

- **Lack of energy and motivation** – Making it difficult to engage in chores, work and school.
- **Diminished interest and enjoyment** – Activities, such as hobbies, may lose their appeal or may not feel good anymore.
- **Social withdrawal** – Not spending time with friends, family, and loved ones, which leads to isolation.
- **Difficulties expressing emotions** – Even if emotions are experienced internally, facial expressions and tone of voice may become blunted or flattened.

### 3. Cognitive symptoms, which can include:

- **Difficulty with concentration** – Focusing and paying attention to tasks can be difficult.
- **Understanding information** – Can become harder, such as in conversations or while reading.
- **Decision-making** – Making choices, evaluating options, and reaching conclusions can become challenging.
- **Memory problems** – Both short-term and long-term memory can be impacted, making it difficult to recall recent events, conversations or even more distant memories.

## How Common Is Schizophrenia?

- In the past year, 1.2% of adults aged 18 to 65 years in the U.S. – approximately 2.5 million adults – met the diagnostic criteria for schizophrenia.<sup>2</sup>
- The prevalence of schizophrenia is similar in men and women, but the symptoms usually occur at an earlier age in men (late teen years to early twenties) than in women (early twenties to early thirties).<sup>3</sup>

- Schizophrenia is among the 15 leading causes of disability worldwide.<sup>3</sup>
- Genetics play a role in causing schizophrenia: If both parents have the disease, there's a 40% chance their child will also have it.<sup>4</sup>

## How Is Schizophrenia Diagnosed?

To diagnose schizophrenia, a healthcare provider will conduct a thorough review of a person's current and past symptoms, in addition to their medical, family and psychiatric history.

Although there's no single test available to diagnose schizophrenia, healthcare providers will also usually do a physical exam, as well as neurological and laboratory testing, to help rule out other conditions that may cause symptoms similar to schizophrenia. Because people with schizophrenia sometimes aren't aware that they have a mental illness, engaging them in treatment can be complicated.

## How Is Schizophrenia Treated?

There is currently no cure for schizophrenia, but it is a highly

**With early and proper treatment, many people living with schizophrenia can lead independent, fulfilling and productive lives.**

**treatable disease.<sup>5</sup> Schizophrenia can be treated and managed in several ways:**

- Antipsychotic medications are considered critical to effective treatment of schizophrenia. They can help make psychotic symptoms less severe and occur less frequently. Antipsychotic medications are available in pill and liquid forms, which are typically taken daily. In addition, long-acting antipsychotic medications are available that can be given as injections monthly, every three months or sometimes every six months.
- Psychosocial therapy is used along with medication to help identify and change negative thoughts and behavior, as well as learn to cope with symptoms.
- Healthy lifestyle choices can play a role in managing schizophrenia, including having good sleep habits, reducing stress, avoiding alcohol and drugs, and staying connected with family and friends.
- Support groups can provide an opportunity to connect with and learn from other people who understand your lived experience. Find information about support groups for people with schizophrenia, their families and caregivers at the Schizophrenia & Psychosis Action Alliance (SPAA) website: [sczaction.org/peer-support-groups](http://sczaction.org/peer-support-groups)

**For more information about schizophrenia:**

**Schizophrenia International Research Society (SIRS)**  
[schizophreniaresearchsociety.org](http://schizophreniaresearchsociety.org)

**Schizophrenia & Psychosis Action Alliance (SPAA)**  
[sczaction.org](http://sczaction.org)

**Schizophrenia Spectrum Biomarkers Consortium (SSBC)** [ssbcbio.org](http://ssbcbio.org)

**Treatment Advocacy Center (TAC)**  
[treatmentadvocacycenter.org](http://treatmentadvocacycenter.org)

### References:

1. National Institute of Mental Health. Mental Health Information – Schizophrenia. Accessed at: [nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/schizophrenia#part\\_145431](http://nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/schizophrenia#part_145431)
2. Ringeisen H, Edlund M J, Guyer H, et al. Mental and Substance Use Disorders Prevalence Study – Findings Report. 2023 RTI International. Accessed at: [rti.org/publication/mental-and-substance-use-disorders-prevalence-study](http://rti.org/publication/mental-and-substance-use-disorders-prevalence-study)
3. National Institute of Mental Health. Mental Health Information: Statistics – Schizophrenia. Accessed at: [nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/schizophrenia](http://nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/schizophrenia)
4. Patel KR, Cherian J, Gohil K, et al. Schizophrenia: Overview and Treatment Options. Pharmacy & Therapeutics. (2014) Sep; 39(9): 638–645. Accessed at: [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4159061/](http://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4159061/)
5. Treatment Advocacy Center. Schizophrenia – Fact Sheet. Accessed at: [treatmentadvocacycenter.org/evidence-and-research/learn-more-about/25-schizophrenia-fact-sheet](http://treatmentadvocacycenter.org/evidence-and-research/learn-more-about/25-schizophrenia-fact-sheet)



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For mental health and suicide prevention information and resources, visit the Rural Mental Health Resilience Program website at [www.RuralMinds.org.resilience](http://www.RuralMinds.org.resilience)

or via the QR code below:

