

SCHIZOPHRENIA

**MAKING MENTAL HEALTH
MATTER FOR EVERYONE**



www.sadag.org

24 hr Mental Health Helpline | 📞 0800 - 456 - 789
24 hr Suicide Crisis Helpline | 📞 0800 - 567 - 567
(8am-5pm) WhatsApp Chatline | 🗨️ 076 - 882 - 2775

[f @TheSADAG](https://www.facebook.com/TheSADAG) [@sadag_official](https://www.instagram.com/sadag_official) [@TheSADAG](https://www.twitter.com/TheSADAG)

SCHIZOPHRENIA

What is Schizophrenia?

Schizophrenia is a serious Mental Illness that affects how a person thinks, feels, and behaves. People with Schizophrenia may seem as though they have lost touch with reality, which can be distressing for them and their loved ones. Schizophrenia is usually diagnosed between the ages of 16 and 30 years old, though early-onset cases can occur in childhood or adolescence. People with Schizophrenia need lifelong treatment including medicine, talk therapy and help in learning how to manage daily life activities.

Symptoms:

Each person experiences different symptoms. It is often a mix of hallucinations, delusions, and disorganised thinking and behaviour. People with Schizophrenia can seem to lose touch with reality, which can make daily living very hard. Symptoms may include:

Positive Symptoms:



Delusions: A common symptom of Schizophrenia. They are fixed false beliefs that are not based on reality. Examples include believing that others are trying to harm you, or that you have a special connection to a religious figure or a unique and important role in the world.

Hallucinations: Involve seeing, hearing, smelling, or feeling things that aren't real. Hearing voices is the most common type. For someone experiencing hallucinations, these sensations feel completely real.

Disorganised Speech: It can be hard for people with Schizophrenia to talk with other people. Replies to questions may not be related to what's being asked or questions may not be answered fully. Rarely, speech may include putting together unrelated words in a way that can't be understood. Thoughts may jump from one thing to another and might lead you to start talking quickly or slowly. Things you say might not make sense to other people.

Extremely Disorganised Motor Behaviour: This may show in many ways, from childlike silliness to unpredictable agitation. Behaviour isn't focused on a goal, so it's hard to do tasks. Behaviour can include resistance to instructions, inappropriate or abnormal posture, a complete lack of response, or inappropriate and excessive movement.

Negative Symptoms:

People living with Schizophrenia may have difficulty in their ability to function as they did before their illness, however it is not the same for everyone. With the correct treatment and support, many people with Schizophrenia are able to continue working, studying, and live a fulfilling life.

- Hygiene:** Neglecting bathing and washing.
- Social Behaviour:** Severe social withdrawal.
- Apathy:** Appear to lack emotion, no eye contact, flat expression, monotone.
- Anhedonia:** Loss of interest in everyday activities or lack the ability to experience fun or joy.

Coping With Schizophrenia Is A Lifelong Process.

A Schizophrenia diagnosis can be very scary. Despite the common misconception that recovery or improvement is impossible, the reality is much more hopeful. Living with Schizophrenia does not mean a life of worsening symptoms and hospitalisations, the right treatment and staying committed to treatment can lead to a functional life.

What Causes Schizophrenia?

The exact causes of Schizophrenia are not fully understood, but it is believed to be a complex interaction of genetic and environmental factors. Here are some of the factors that may contribute to the development of Schizophrenia:



Genetic Factors:

Family history: Having a close relative with Schizophrenia significantly increases the risk of developing the disorder.

Specific genes: Researchers have identified several genes that may contribute to developing the disorder.



Environmental Factors:

Prenatal factors: Exposure to certain viruses, toxins, or malnutrition during pregnancy may increase the risk.

Birth complications: Complications during birth, such as oxygen deprivation, may increase the risk.

Drug use: Early use of certain drugs, may increase the risk.

Stressful life events: Stressful life events, such as loss, trauma, or abuse, can play a role in the onset of Schizophrenia symptoms.



Brain Chemistry:

Chemical imbalance: Imbalances in certain brain chemicals may contribute to Schizophrenia.

Brain structure abnormalities: Studies have shown that some people with Schizophrenia have differences in brain structure.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

Treatment includes a combination of medication, therapy, psychosocial rehabilitation, and family support to reduce symptoms and improve quality of life. Early intervention is key, as it can lessen the severity of symptoms. While treatment approaches vary and individuals respond differently, a combination is often recommended. Many find that treatment significantly reduces symptoms, making daily life easier, and ongoing treatment is often necessary to maintain well-being.

Medication: Medication plays an important role in managing Schizophrenia. While antipsychotics are the primary treatment, some individuals may be prescribed antidepressants or mood stabilizers. Antipsychotic medications help with psychotic symptoms like delusions and hallucinations. A doctor may also prescribe other medications, such as antidepressants or mood stabilisers, to address specific symptoms or side effects. It's important to work closely with your doctor to find the right medication and dosage.

Psychotherapy:

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) helps identify and challenge negative thoughts and beliefs that contribute to symptoms, while also developing coping skills for stress management and improved functioning.

Family Therapy educates families about Schizophrenia. It also helps in improving communication, and reduces family stress.

Psychosocial Treatments:

People who participate in psychosocial interventions often see improvements in daily functioning and Mental stability. Psychosocial treatments enable people to replace or eliminate the barriers caused by their diagnosis and learn to live successfully. If a person participates in psychosocial rehabilitation, they are more likely to continue taking their medication and less likely to relapse. They also learn to develop social skills to help them interact with others and build relationships.

Tips For Loved Ones:

Schizophrenia is a chronic and often distressing Mental Health condition, impacting not only the individual but also their family and friends. If you are supporting someone with Schizophrenia, it's crucial learn more about the illness and make sure to prioritise your own Well-being as well.

Familiarise yourself with Schizophrenia:

Learn about Schizophrenia, including its various symptoms and treatments. Understanding your loved one's experiences allows you to support them more effectively.



Join a Support Group: Connect with loved ones who understand. Support Groups for caregivers of people with Schizophrenia offer valuable support and are available online and in person. Visit www.sadag.org for more info.



Prioritise your own Self-Care:

Caring for someone with Schizophrenia can be demanding, and it's easy to neglect your own Well-being.

Remember to focus on your physical and Mental Health, especially when you're feeling tired & emotionally drained.

Remember:

While you can't force someone to get help, you can offer support and encouragement. Help your loved one find a qualified doctor or Mental Health professional. Whether you're living with Schizophrenia or supporting someone who is, remember you're not alone. Many people find ways to cope and live fulfilling lives, defined not by the condition, but by their strength and resilience.

Debunking Myths:

Myth: People with Schizophrenia are dangerous.

Fact: No. People with Schizophrenia are generally not dangerous when receiving appropriate treatment. However, a minority of people with the disorder may become aggressive during an untreated acute episode due to hallucinations or delusions. Usually, this aggressive behaviour is directed toward themselves, and the risk of Suicide can be high.

Myth: People with Schizophrenia have split personalities.

Fact: No. Schizophrenia refers to changes in a person's mental functioning, where thoughts and perceptions become distorted. People with Schizophrenia do not have multiple personalities.

Myth: People with Schizophrenia are intellectually disabled.

Fact: No. Schizophrenia is not an intellectual disability. However, neurocognitive impairment can occur and may affect memory, attention, and planning skills, which are needed for work or study. Difficulty coping with day-to-day activities (such as managing money, problem-solving, and self-care) can affect a person's independence. Some people with persistent symptoms may require additional rehabilitation strategies due to learning and planning difficulties. Others are able to function normally when their symptoms are well-managed.

Myth: People with Schizophrenia can't work.

Fact: Many people with Schizophrenia can work, full-time or part-time, especially when they're getting the right treatment and support. They often want to work and be part of the community. Working can really help with recovery.

MANAGING SCHIZOPHRENIA

Practical Self-Help Strategies to Improve Your Life:



Always make sure to take your medication

- Set a daily alarm to remind you to take your medication.
- Use a pillbox to keep track of your doses each week.



Find a routine that works for you

- Stick to a consistent schedule for eating, sleeping, and daily activities.
- Plan small tasks for each part of your day.



Avoid stressors & practise relaxation

- Practise deep breathing when you are feeling overwhelmed.
- Engage in calming activities like listening to music or taking a short walk.



Exercise regularly to boost your mood

- Move your body daily—stretch, walk, or do an activity you enjoy.
- Try exercises like yoga, dancing, or jogging to relieve stress and improve mood.



Sleep enough to stay healthy and happy

- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.
- Avoid using your phone or TV before bed, rather do an activity like reading.



Practise cognitive techniques

- Use a mood diary to track your emotions.
- Picture a safe, calming place or try meditation to reduce Stress and Anxiety. Find more examples at www.sadag.org.



Keep your mind busy by learning a new skill

- Try simple activities like drawing, cooking, or gardening.
- Join a local group or class to learn and chat with others.



Challenge distorted thoughts

- When you have a negative thought, ask yourself if it's really true.
- Talk to someone you trust when you feel confused.



Avoid caffeine, alcohol and drugs

- Drink water or herbal tea instead of coffee or energy drinks.
- Avoid places where alcohol and drug use are common or encouraged.



Download apps that can help you

- Use apps that remind you to take your medication.
- Try a relaxation app with deep breathing exercises.