

# Schizophrenia

## Recognizing the Symptoms and Getting Treatment

Schizophrenia is a lifelong medical condition that affects the brain. This disorder can change how people think, feel, act, and live. Symptoms can vary from one person to the next, can change over time, or come and go in phases. Some commonly reported symptoms include those below.

- **Hallucinations:** sensing things that others do not, such as hearing or seeing things
- **Delusions:** strongly believing something is true even when there is no evidence of it
- **Altered emotions:** having feelings that do not seem to fit with reality, or having no feelings at all
- **Withdrawal:** no drive or desire to do the things you used to enjoy
- **Lack of motivation:** difficulty staying focused and doing tasks
- **Disorganization:** having disorganized thinking, speaking, or behavior
- **Cognitive problems:** such as with attention and memory

### Schizophrenia symptoms are typically separated into 2 categories:

**Positive symptoms:** *Behaviors that people usually do not have, such as:*

- Believing that what other people are saying is not true (delusions)
- Hearing, seeing, tasting, feeling, or smelling things that others do not experience (hallucinations)
- Disorganized speech and behavior

**Negative symptoms:** *A lack of behaviors or feelings that people usually have, such as:*

- Losing interest in everyday activities, such as bathing, grooming, or getting dressed
- Feeling out of touch with other people, family, or friends
- Lack of feeling or emotion (apathy)
- Having little emotion or inappropriate feelings in certain situations
- Having less ability to experience pleasure

### Treatment of schizophrenia typically involves different health care professionals.

**Treatment Team may include:**

- **Psychiatrists:** A medical doctor who specializes in mental health and prescribes and manages medication
- **Psychologists, psychiatric social workers, or counselors:** Professionals who specialize in psychosocial treatments, such as cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) or family therapy
- **Nurse practitioners and physician assistants:** Health care professionals to help manage day-to-day treatment
- **Nurses:** Health care providers who work closely with caregivers, case workers, and social workers to discuss a patient's treatment and needs
- **Social workers:** Professionals who offer counseling and social skills training and can help arrange for various social services
- **Case Managers:** Providers who can help find services and programs that help patients with daily living. They can also help apply for benefits and arrange for training.
- **Occupational therapists or employment counselors:** Professionals who can help find the skills needed for work or school, once a patient is sticking to their treatment and showing signs of recovery.

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### Useful links for learning about and living with schizophrenia

**[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)**

1-866-615-6464 (toll free) —The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) offers information on mental illnesses and treatment options.

**[www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org)**

1-800-445-8106 (toll free) —The Family Caregiver Alliance is a nationwide public voice for caregivers of loved ones with chronic health conditions.

**[www.healthyminds.org](http://www.healthyminds.org)**

Healthy Minds is the American Psychiatric Association's online resource for anyone seeking support or facts about mental illnesses.

**[www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net)**

Mental Health America, formerly the National Mental Health Association, is the country's oldest and largest nonprofit organization for mental health and mental illness.

**[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)**

1-800-950-NAMI (6264) —The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) supports people with mental illness and their families and friends.