



SCHIZOPHRENIA

*Provided through the Marketing and Development Committee
of the Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas*

WHAT IS SCHIZOPHRENIA?



Schizophrenia symptoms usually develop slowly over months or years. Schizophrenia affects both men and women with equal frequency, but most often appears in men in their late teens or early twenties, while it appears in women in their late twenties or early thirties.

A common perception of schizophrenia is that it is a devastating disorder. Although schizophrenia can be a very serious and chronic illness, it varies greatly among individuals. Many people with schizophrenia are able to live independently, work and lead normal lives. Others may need ongoing support, but still can attain meaningful recovery.

SYMPTOMS OF SCHIZOPHRENIA

Hallucinations - Hallucinations can take a number of different forms:

1. Visual (seeing things that are not there or that other people cannot see),
2. Auditory (hearing voices that other people can't hear),
3. Tactile (feeling things that other people don't feel or something touching your skin that isn't there),
4. Olfactory (smelling things that other people cannot smell, or not smelling the same thing that other people do smell),
5. Gustatory experiences (tasting things that aren't there)

Delusions - false beliefs strongly held in spite of invalidating evidence, especially as a symptom of mental illness:

1. Paranoid delusions, or delusions of persecution, for example believing that people are "out to get" you, or the thought that people are doing things when there is no external evidence that such things are taking place.
2. Delusions of reference - when things in the environment seem to be directly related to you even though they are not. For example it may seem as if people are talking about you or special personal messages are being communicated to you through the TV, radio, or other media.
3. Somatic Delusions are false beliefs about your body - for example that a terrible physical illness exists or that something foreign is inside or passing through your body.
4. Delusions of grandeur - for example when you believe that you are very special or have special powers or abilities. An example of a grandiose delusion is thinking you are a famous rock star.



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FUNCTIONAL IMPAIRMENTS



- Lack of emotion - the inability to enjoy regular activities (visiting with friends, etc.) as much as before
- Low energy - the person tends to sit around and sleep much more than normal
- Lack of interest in life, low motivation
- Affective flattening - a blank, blunted facial expression or less lively facial movements, flat voice (lack of normal intonations and variance) or physical movements
- Alogia (difficulty or inability to speak)
- Inappropriate social skills or lack of interest or ability to socialize with other people
- Inability to make friends or keep friends, or not caring to have friends
- Social isolation - person spends most of the day alone or only with close family
- Cognitive Symptoms
- Disorganized thinking
- Slow thinking
- Difficulty understanding
- Poor concentration
- Poor memory
- Problems with attention



TREATMENT

- **Medication** - antipsychotic medications, often in combination with psychological and social supports are given for management of schizophrenia. Hospitalization may occur for severe episodes either voluntarily or involuntarily. Long-term hospitalization is uncommon since treatment is available in most communities.
- **Psychosocial** - community support services including drop-in centers, visits by members of a community mental health team, supported employment and support groups are common. Some evidence indicates that regular exercise has a positive effect on the physical and mental health of those with schizophrenia.

MORE INFORMATION



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