

What is Schizophrenia?

Schizophrenia is a mental disorder that interferes with a person's ability to think clearly, make decisions, manage their emotions and relate to others. Affecting only 1% of the population, this life-long illness usually develops between ages 16 to 30. It can impact many aspects of a person's life. This includes interactions at school or work and dealing with family and friends.



Symptoms

The symptoms of schizophrenia can make it hard to function in daily life. A comprehensive medical evaluation should be completed for someone who may be showing signs of this disorder. A trained mental health professional should make the diagnosis.

A few defining characteristics of this disorder are:

Delusions: When someone believes something that is not true or logical. Example: someone who thinks they are famous or that music on the radio is a message for them

Hallucinations: Seeing, hearing or smelling things that aren't real. Example: hearing voices no one else does

Confused thoughts and speech: People with this symptom have a hard time organizing thoughts. They might not be able to follow along when you talk to them. It might seem like they are zoning out or distracted. When they talk, their words can come out jumbled and not make sense

Negative symptoms: Characterized by having reduced feelings of pleasure in everyday life. They may show very little emotion or have a hard time speaking. People with this symptom may be unable to follow through with activities or sustain relationships

Risk Factors

Genetics

Some people are more likely to develop schizophrenia than others based on their genetic make-up. This disorder tends to run in families.

Environment:

Some external factors may be a cause for schizophrenia. This includes:

- Malnutrition
- Autoimmune disease
- Problems during birth
- Growing up in an urban environment

Brain Chemistry:

There may be an imbalance of chemicals in the brain that can lead to the disorder.

Treatment

There is no cure for schizophrenia, but the symptoms can be managed through:

- Antipsychotic medication
- Psychotherapy, also known as “talk therapy”
- Assertive community treatment
- Self-management and education

When symptoms are under control, a person with this disorder can achieve their goals and live a productive life.

MeridianComplete (Medicare-Medicaid Plan) Resources

If you are having suicidal thoughts or are worried that someone you know might be suicidal, contact the Suicide Prevention Lifeline, **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**.

MeridianComplete is a health plan that contracts with both Medicare and Illinois Medicaid to provide benefits of both programs to enrollees.

ATTENTION: If you speak English, language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Call **1-855-580-1689** (TTY: **711**).

ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al **1-855-580-1689** (TTY: **711**).