

Schizophrenia



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Those with schizophrenia can hear, see or smell things that are not there known as “hallucinating. They may have delusions which is believing things that are not true. About 1% of American have schizophrenia. It is a complicated, long-term medical illness. Most people diagnosed with schizophrenia are teenagers or young adults.

What are the symptoms?

There are many different signs of schizophrenia. Each person diagnosed with schizophrenia will experience their symptoms differently. Some of these signs can include:

- Seeing or hearing things that are not there (called hallucinations)
- Having beliefs that are not true
- Having a hard time thinking clearly
- Memory loss
- Do not believe that they have an illness (this is known as anosognosia)
- Does not express a lot of emotion
- Speaking in a dull way.
- Difficulty maintaining conversation

To be diagnosed, a person must experience at least 2 of the above symptoms for 6 months as well as having difficulties functioning at home, work or school

What are the causes?

There are many things that may cause schizophrenia. Scientists believe that a few of these are:

- **Genetics**, schizophrenia may run in families.
- **Environment** like not getting enough nutrients before birth.
- **Brain Structure** Some parts of the brain react differently for a person who has schizophrenia.
- **Drug use.** Taking mind-altering drugs before the brain has finished developing may increase the risk of schizophrenia.

Diagnosis

It can be hard to diagnose schizophrenia. Many people with schizophrenia experience anosognosia or their symptoms are very similar to other diagnoses (such as depression or bipolar disorder).

People can describe symptoms in a variety of ways. How a person describes symptoms often depends on the cultural lens they are looking through. African Americans and Latinos are more likely to be misdiagnosed, potentially due to differing cultural perspectives or structural barriers. Any person who has been diagnosed with schizophrenia should try to work with a health care professional that understands his or her cultural background and shares the same expectations for treatment.

Treatment

There is no cure for schizophrenia. People with schizophrenia should get treatment as soon as possible to reduce the severity of their symptoms. Recovery while living with schizophrenia is often seen over time and means a combination of treatments. Those with schizophrenia should talk with their doctor to find treatment options that are best for them. Treatment options include:

- **Medications**, such as antipsychotics like Clozapine, Chlropromazine and Haldol to name a few. It should be noted that many of these medications can have very severe side effects.
- **Psychotherapy**, such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) or cognitive enhancement therapy (CET).
- **Psychosocial Treatments**, such as assertive community treatment (ACT) which provides individual services and daily professional support, as well as peer support groups and family support.
- **Complementary Health Approaches**, such as acupuncture, meditation and changes in diet.

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