

# Schizophrenia

Per the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, **Schizophrenia** involves an abnormal interpretation of reality. It is a complex mental illness that affects how a person thinks, feels, behaves and relates to others. The illness occurs in both men and women, but it is slightly more common in men.

## Signs and Symptoms

Impairment in ability to think clearly, manage emotions, make decisions, and relate to others. May cause an abnormal interpretation of reality. Differs in severity from person to person, some may only have one psychotic break while others experience a slower decline over their life. Symptoms are categorized as positive symptoms, negative symptoms, or cognitive (which may intersect).

**Positive** symptoms are psychotic behaviours not seen in healthy individuals and include:

- Hallucinations or smelling things undetectable by others, or feeling touch in absence of stimuli
- Delusions
- Thought disorders
- Disordered thinking - trouble connecting thoughts in a rational order
- Thought blocking - talking stops in the middle of a statement, with feeling the thought was taken away

**Negative** symptoms are disruptions of emotions and behaviours, often mistaken for other disorders and include:

- needing help to complete everyday tasks
- Neglecting personal hygiene
- Speaking little even when forced to act
- Anhedonia (inability to feel pleasure)

**Cognitive** Symptoms are subtle and difficult to identify:

- Poor executive function - making decision making difficult
- Trouble focusing
- Trouble paying attention
- Great emotional distress
- Challenges leading a normal life

## Common Causes

Typically relate to genetic, physical, and environmental factors.

**Genetic:** Having a family member (first degree) greatly increases risk

**Physical:** Brain structure appears different, and imbalances in brain neurotransmitters are apparent in those who have schizophrenia

**Environmental:** Prenatal exposure to toxins, maternal malnutrition, or infections may contribute to development of schizophrenia.

Other risk factors include:

- Psychoactive or psychotropic drug use
- Death of a parent during childhood
- Parental poverty as a child
- Child abuse
- Victim of bullying
- Being male

## Treatment

Treatment is centered around medication, once an appropriate examination and diagnosis has been conducted. Individual therapy, group therapy, and family therapy also play a role in various treatment strategies, depending on the severity of schizophrenia.

## Self - Assessment

<https://screening.mhanational.org/screening-tools/psychosis>

- While not for schizophrenia directly, the link above is helpful for screening if you are experiencing any symptoms or signs of a mental health condition related to Schizophrenia.

