

# Learning About Schizoaffective Disorder



## What is schizoaffective disorder?

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Schizoaffective (say "skit-so-af-FECK-tiv") disorder is a complex mental illness. People who have it have the symptoms of both schizophrenia and a mood disorder.

The disorder affects how clearly you can think. It can also make it hard to manage your emotions and connect with others. And it affects how happy or sad you feel.

## What causes it?

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Experts don't know what causes schizoaffective disorder. It may have different causes for different people. It's not caused by anything you did or how your parents raised you. And it's not a sign of weakness.

## What are the symptoms?

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The symptoms of schizoaffective disorder are the same as those of schizophrenia and a mood disorder.

People with schizoaffective disorder may have many of these symptoms.

Schizophrenia symptoms include:

- Having hallucinations. This means that you see or hear things that aren't really there.
- Having delusions. These are beliefs that aren't real.
- Having a hard time feeling and showing emotion.

Mood disorder symptoms include:

- Depression.
- Feeling extremely happy or having lots of energy.

## How is it diagnosed?

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Your doctor or mental health professional usually can tell if you have schizoaffective disorder by talking with you. He or she will look at the order and timing of your symptoms and how long your symptoms last.

Your doctor will ask you about other things too. These may include questions about:

- Any odd experiences you may have had, such as hearing voices or having confusing thoughts.
- Your feelings.
- Any changes in eating habits, energy level, and interest in daily tasks.
- How well you are sleeping.
- If you can focus on the things you do.

## How is it treated?

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Finding out that you have schizoaffective disorder can be scary and hard to deal with. But the disorder can be treated.

The goal of treatment is to lower your stress and help your brain work as it should. Ongoing treatment can keep the disorder under control. Treatment includes medicines and counseling.

Medicines help your symptoms. It's important to take your medicines on schedule to keep your moods even. When you feel good, you may think that you don't need them. But it is important to keep taking them.

Counseling helps you change how you think about things. It can also help you cope with the illness. You will work with a mental health professional. This may be a psychologist, a licensed professional counselor, a clinical social worker, or a psychiatrist.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

### Where can you learn more?

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Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **A016** in the search box to learn more about "**Learning About Schizoaffective Disorder**".

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