

Schizophrenia: Care Instructions

Overview

Schizophrenia is a disease that makes it hard to think clearly, manage emotions, and interact with other people. It can cause:

- Delusions. These are beliefs that are not real.
- Hallucinations. These are things that you may see or hear that are not really there.
- Paranoia. This is the belief that others are lying, cheating, using you, or trying to harm you.

The disease may change your ability to enjoy life, express emotions, or function. You may hear voices or behave strangely. You may also keep to yourself or have trouble speaking or understanding speech.

You may need lifelong treatment with medicines and counseling. This helps keep the disease under control.

When schizophrenia is not treated, the risks are higher for suicide, a hospital stay, and other problems. Early treatment called coordinated specialty care (CSC) may help a person who is having their first episode of psychotic thoughts. Ask your doctor about CSC.

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.

How can you care for yourself at home?

Follow your treatment plan

- Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine. When you feel good, you may think that you do not need your medicines, but it is important to keep taking them as scheduled.
- Go to your counseling sessions. Call and talk with your counselor if you cannot attend or do not think the sessions are helping. Do not just stop going.
- Go to any skill training your doctor recommends. This may include training for social or job skills.
- Go to a support group. A support group gives you the chance to talk with others who are going through the same things you are.
- Work with your family or close friends. They can help you get the right treatment, deal with your symptoms, and manage your daily activities.
- Learn about schizophrenia. This can improve the quality of your life and the lives of those who care about you.
- Learn how to recognize the first signs of relapse. A relapse happens when symptoms return or get worse after you have been doing better. Signs of a relapse include not wanting to do things with others and having problems concentrating. Have a plan to deal with relapse and get help right away.
- Help yourself by focusing on your recovery goals and learning to see schizophrenia as one part of your life, not your entire life.

Live a healthy lifestyle

- Do not drink alcohol or use illegal drugs. Having problems with drugs or alcohol makes treating schizophrenia harder. If you have problems with drugs or alcohol, you need to treat both that problem and schizophrenia to help yourself get better. Talk to your doctor if you have this kind of problem.
- Get plenty of exercise every day. Go for a walk or jog, ride your bike, or play sports. Exercise and activity can keep you fit.
- Relieve stress. Reducing stress may mean fewer relapses.
- Get enough sleep. Sleep can help your mood and make you feel less stressed.
- Eat a balanced diet. Whole grains, dairy products, fruits, vegetables, and protein are part of a balanced diet.
- Do not smoke. Smoking increases the risk for other diseases, such as cancer and heart disease. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good.

Where to get help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

If you or someone you know talks about suicide, self-harm, a mental health crisis, a substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress, get help right away. You can:

- Call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at **988**.
- Call **1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)**.
- Text **HOME to 741741** to access the Crisis Text Line.

Consider saving these numbers in your phone.

Go to [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org) for more information or to chat online.

When should you call for help?



Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You are thinking about suicide or are threatening suicide.
- You feel like hurting yourself or someone else.

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Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You hear voices.
- You think someone is trying to harm you.
- You cannot concentrate or are easily confused.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You are having trouble taking care of yourself.
- You cannot attend your counseling sessions.

Where can you learn more?

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

Enter **B628** in the search box to learn more about "**Schizophrenia: Care Instructions**".

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