

# Schizophrenia Facts

## What is Schizophrenia?

Schizophrenia is a complex mental health condition with a range of symptoms that affect a person's thoughts, emotions, and behavior. It is a lifelong brain disorder that interferes with a person's ability to live independently.

With treatment, the positive symptoms of schizophrenia may reduce substantially and stay reduced for long periods. The risk of self-harm and of violence to others is greatest when the mental health condition is untreated.

Most people with schizophrenia are not violent. Overall, people with schizophrenia are more likely than those without the mental health condition to be harmed by others.

## Common Symptoms of Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia symptoms can differ from person to person. Many of these symptoms are shared with other mental and physical disorders. Symptoms of schizophrenia are categorized in three ways: positive, negative, and cognitive

- **Positive symptoms, also known as psychosis:** include delusions, hallucinations, and disorganized thinking.
- **Negative symptoms:** include detachment, withdrawal, inability to express emotions, apathy (lack of motivation).
- **Cognitive symptoms:** include problems with attention, concentration, and memory.

## Diagnosis

Diagnosis should be made by a qualified health professional.

People with schizophrenia are usually first diagnosed between the ages of 16 and 30. The steps to determine a diagnosis of schizophrenia include:

- **A physical exam:** to rule out medical problems or other mental health conditions.
- **Tests and screenings:** These may include screening for substance use and bloodwork. The doctor may also order MRI or CT scans.
- **Psychiatric evaluation:** A doctor conducts a thorough review of the person's medical, psychiatric, and family history as well as observation of the resident.



Older adults rarely have a new diagnosis of schizophrenia. To learn more about the risks of antipsychotic drugs for older adults with dementia-related psychosis, review the [FDA black box warning](#).

Sources: [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#), [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), and the [American Psychiatry Association](#).

## For Help and More Information

- For comprehensive on-demand training on schizophrenia and additional resources visit [www.nursinghomebehavioralhealth.org](http://www.nursinghomebehavioralhealth.org).
- Information is also available in [Appendix PP of the State Operations Manual](#) and the [Minimum Data Set 3.0 Resident Assessment Instrument Manual](#).