

Psychosis and Schizophrenia: Do I Need Help?

Psychosis and schizophrenia are mental health conditions that affect how a person thinks, feels, and behaves,¹ and can occur at any age. Psychosis can occur as part of several mental disorders and medical conditions. One type of mental disorder with psychosis as a major feature is schizophrenia. The typical age of onset of schizophrenia is late adolescence or early adulthood with prevalence peaking at age 40.²



What are the signs and symptoms of schizophrenia?

Symptoms may include:³

- Delusions
- Hallucinations
- Disorganized speech (e.g., frequently derailment or incoherence)
- Extremely disorganized behavior
- Decreased emotional expression or lack of motivation



What are some treatment options for schizophrenia?

Medication is the primary treatment recommended for schizophrenia.²

Non-pharmacological evidence-based treatments for schizophrenia include:²

- Family interventions (including problem solving-based self-learning, education, and mutual family support) for individuals with first-episode psychosis.
- Psychosocial interventions provided to a primary support person or family member to decrease the risk of relapse and hospitalization for individuals with schizophrenia.
- Assertive Community Treatment services to improve functioning and reduce repeated hospitalizations.
- Individual Placement and Support model of supported employment designed to help individuals gain and maintain competitive employment.

Early intervention and coordinated support for persons with schizophrenia can reduce symptom severity and enhance your quality of life.²



When should you seek help?

Seek help when you experience any of the following, or someone you know tells you they observe you experiencing:⁴

- Sudden drop in grades or job performance
- New trouble thinking clearly or concentrating
- Suspiciousness, paranoid ideas, or uneasiness with others
- Social withdrawal, spending a lot more time alone than usual
- Unusual, overly intense new ideas, strange feelings, or no feelings at all
- Decline in self-care or personal hygiene
- Difficulty telling reality from fantasy
- Confused speech or trouble communicating

If you are experiencing thoughts of suicide, thoughts of harming yourself or someone else, see a healthcare provider. If you need immediate help because you are experiencing thoughts of death or suicide, call or text 988, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

1. National Institute of Mental Health. (2023, May). *Schizophrenia*. National Institutes of Health. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/schizophrenia>

2. Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense. (2023). *VA/DOD clinical practice guideline for the management of first-episode psychosis and schizophrenia* (Version 1.0). <https://www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/MH/SCZ>

3. American Psychiatric Association. (2022). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed., text rev.). <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425596>

4. National Institute of Mental Health. (2023). *Understanding psychosis*. National Institutes of Health. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/understanding-psychosis>