

# Schizophrenia

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## What is Schizophrenia?

- Schizophrenia is a mental illness that can cause changes in a person's thought and actions.
- For males, Schizophrenia most often begins in the late teens to early twenties.
- For females, first signs most often begin in the late twenties to early thirties.
- It is thought that there 2 – 2.5 million people in the United States with Schizophrenia.
- The start of signs and changes may be fast or slow.
- Studies show a family link to a person having schizophrenia.
- People with schizophrenia are not usually violent, but they are often shown this way on TV and in movies. This is unfair.

## Common Signs

Symptoms are divided into three groups: positive, negative, and a person's actions.

Positive signs include:

### **Thinking things that are not true:**

Thinking things that are not true even when it is clear that they are not. Sometimes people feel that others are being mean to them, they may feel that they are more special than they are (for example, famous), or they are in charge of things they are not. Sometimes people can think they control the shows on TV. Sometimes people think someone is watching them or following them.



**Seeing, hearing, or feeling people or things that are not there.** Some examples are having a strange feeling on the skin, like a crawling or burning feeling, or smelling something that is not there. Most often, it could be hearing voices that are not really there.

- The voices may be scary or say mean things.
- The voices may talk to the person, or two or more voices may talk to each other. They may be loud or sound like whispering.
- They may tell the person to do things.

**Negative signs** are changes to feelings and actions. They can include:

- A person's face does not show feelings and he or she speaks in a flat voice.
- Not smiling, frowning, or a blank expression.
- Having little or no fun in everyday life.

**Changes in ways people do things** may include the following:

- Problems understanding information and making choices.
- Trouble paying attention.
- Problems getting things done and forgetting what they are doing.

Sometimes, symptoms change over time. Everyone will have their own signs or problems and some of may not be listed here. If you have schizophrenia, it is important to know what signs you have. It is important to let your supports know so you can get the help and care that you need.

### My Signs (check yours):

- Thinking things that are not true
- Problems taking care of myself
- Seeing, hearing things or people that are not there
- Trouble paying attention
- Problems remembering things
- Trouble learning information
- Trouble when talking to others
- Trouble making decisions

## Resources

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### **National Alliance on Mental Illness**

1-800-950-6264

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