



SCHIZOPHRENIA

Schizophrenia is a type of psychosis, a severe long-term mental health condition where a person often isn't able to distinguish their own thoughts from reality.

What are the symptoms of schizophrenia?

There are two categories of symptoms of schizophrenia, termed 'positive' (because they are an addition of a new behaviour) and 'negative' (because a previous behaviour is no longer present).

Positive symptoms include:

- hallucinations – hearing, smelling, tasting, seeing or feeling things that don't exist outside of their own mind
- delusions – a belief which is held with complete conviction despite the fact it is based on a mistaken, strange or unrealistic view
- confused thoughts- having trouble keeping track of their thoughts and conversations
- changes in behaviour and thoughts – behaviour and appearance becoming disorganised and unpredictable

Negative symptoms include:

- losing interest and motivation in life and activities (including relationships and sex)
- a lack of concentration
- changes in sleeping patterns
- not wanting to leave the house
- feeling uncomfortable with people/having conversations

For more information on schizophrenia, visit the NHS website:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/schizophrenia

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The exact causes of schizophrenia are still unknown, and it's not known why some people develop symptoms while others don't. However, it has been suggested that the things that increase the chances of developing schizophrenia are:

- genetics – schizophrenia tends to run in families although no one single gene is responsible
- brain development – subtle differences in brain structure
- neurotransmitters – an imbalance of dopamine and serotonin
- pregnancy and birth complications

The main triggers for schizophrenia include stress and drug abuse. They don't directly cause the illness, but increase the chances of developing it.

HOW CAN SCHIZOPHRENIA BE TREATED?

Schizophrenia is often treated with a combination of therapies and medication, usually cognitive behavioural therapy and antipsychotic medications. Most people benefit from being treated by a community mental health team who provide day-to-day support and treatment while also ensuring you have your own independence.

If you suspect you have some symptoms of schizophrenia, you should contact your GP. If it is well managed by taking medication as prescribed, talking to others and recognising acute episodes, then it's possible to reduce the chances of severe relapses.



Most of us know when we are mentally and physically well, but sometimes we need a little extra support to keep well.



There are five simple actions to help maintain and improve your emotional wellbeing in everyday life. Try to build these into your daily life – think of them as your ‘five a day’ for emotional wellbeing.



Connect

Connect with the people around you, with family, friends, colleagues and neighbours at home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you everyday.



Be active

Go for a walk or run, step outside, cycle, play a game, garden or dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity that you enjoy; one that suits your level of mobility and fitness.



Take notice

Be curious, catch sight of the beautiful, remark on the unusual, notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are on a bus or taxi, eating lunch or talking to friends, be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.



Keep learning

Don't be afraid to try something new, rediscover an old hobby or interest or sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility, fix a bike, learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident, as well as being fun to do.



Give to others

Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger, thank someone, smile, volunteer your time, or consider joining a community group. Look out, as well as in, seeing yourself, and your happiness linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and will create connections with the people around you.

The 5 ways to wellbeing were developed by the New Economics Foundation

www.mindingyourhead.info

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