

Everybody's Mental Health Matters



Schizophrenia

What is schizophrenia?

Schizophrenia is a mental disorder experienced by 1:100 people. The first symptoms will often become apparent between the ages of 15 and 35. Schizophrenia affects thinking, emotions and behaviour and is often associated with psychotic symptoms such as hallucinations, delusions, or feelings of being controlled.

Common Symptoms

Schizophrenia symptoms are sometimes described as 'positive' and 'negative.'

Positive Symptoms:

Hallucinations: Some people experience symptoms such as hearing voices, smells and feeling/seeing things that are not there.

Delusions: May involve holding a very strongly held belief or conviction. The belief will often persist even when it is unrealistic and other people will have difficulty challenging the belief. Delusions can also be paranoid, for example believing that the government is spying on you.

Muddled Thinking: Some people find that it can become more difficult to concentrate and that thoughts can wander. This can lead to difficulty completing tasks, or in holding conversations.

Feelings of Being Controlled: Some people feel that their thoughts, feelings or actions are being controlled by an outside agency, or may feel their thoughts are being taken.

Negative Symptoms:

Negative symptoms may include a general loss of interest in life, low energy, poor concentration and discomfort around other people.

Treatment

Research suggests that the longer schizophrenia is left untreated, the greater its impact on your life. The sooner it is identified and treated, the better the outlook. Treatment will usually be in the form of anti-psychotic medications prescribed by a suitably qualified medical professional.

Other forms of support can help you cope with the impact of schizophrenia on your life. These might include

- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
- Counselling and Psychotherapy
- Family Work

Further Information

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk>

<http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk>