

*Providing the Irish community with information, resources, and opportunities to talk about mental health.*

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# SCHIZOPHRENIA

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## What is Schizophrenia?

Schizophrenia is a serious mental illness that impacts how a person thinks, feels, and behaves. Those with schizophrenia may appear as though they have lost touch with reality. The sufferer usually has no insight into the fact that they have an illness.

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## Symptoms

### *Hallucinations*

Such as hearing voices, and seeing and smelling things that are not really there.

### *Delusions*

Rigidly held false beliefs which the sufferer will hold regardless of evidence to the contrary. These beliefs can often involve an external threat to the health or safety of the sufferer.

### *Thought Disorders*

Those with schizophrenia may have disorganized or unusual ways of thinking. They may struggle to remember things or have trouble focusing their mind to complete tasks.

### *Negative Symptoms*

Schizophrenia can also manifest as a dulled experience of normal emotions or behaviors. This can include conveying little emotion through tone of voice or facial expressions, appearing disconnected from what's happening around the person, and reduced feelings of pleasure in everyday life.

## Causes

There is a strong genetic link with the disease often running in families. Environment also seems to play a significant factor, as do imbalances in brain chemistry. Drug use has also been shown to heighten risk for schizophrenia.

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## Diagnosis

As a lack of insight into one's own illness is a common symptom of schizophrenia, it can be difficult to get a diagnosis for someone with the disease.

It is very unusual for schizophrenia to appear in children or those over the age of 40. For women, schizophrenia generally first appears in the late 20's or early 30's, while for men it usually manifests in the late teens and early 20s.

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## Treatment

### *Anti psychotic Medications*

Medications can relieve the symptoms of schizophrenia such as delusions or hallucinations. Due to the unpleasant side effects of the drugs and the fact that many sufferers don't believe they are sick, many don't continue to take their medication.

### *Psychosocial Treatments*

For many, psychosocial interventions are effective in teaching those with schizophrenia to set and meet goals and can prevent relapses or hospitalizations.

### *Psychotherapy*

Treatments such as Cognitive Behavior Therapy or Cognitive Enhancement Therapy (CET) can be helpful.

This fact sheet was produced using material from

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<http://namichicago.org/en/fact-sheets/>

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