

34 FACTS ABOUT SCHIZOPHRENIA AND PSYCHOSIS

Schizophrenia occurs in all societies regardless of class, colour, religion and culture.

1 in 100 people age 18-35 have some type of schizophrenia.

Schizophrenia typically begins between the ages of 15 and 25.

Schizophrenia is more prevalent in men than women.

Schizophrenia is quite rare for people under 10 years of age or over 40 years of age.

At any one time as many as 51 million people worldwide have schizophrenia.

Over 280,000 people in Canada have schizophrenia.

A common myth is that schizophrenia is a split personality. It is not.

Schizophrenia is a form of psychosis in which the person may have difficulty distinguishing between reality and non-reality.

People with schizophrenia may experience hallucinations: things a person sees, hears, smells, or feels that no one else can see, hear, smell, or feel.

Delusions can be a part of schizophrenia: false beliefs that are not part of the person's culture.

Disorganized thinking is common for schizophrenia: when a person has trouble organizing his or her thoughts or connecting them logically.

Positive symptoms of schizophrenia include disordered thinking, delusions and hallucinations.

Negative symptoms of schizophrenia include lack of visible emotion and awareness of other people's feelings; lack of energy, spontaneity or initiative; lack of pleasure in once-enjoyable activities; and difficulty in concentrating.

Cognitive symptoms of schizophrenia include the following:

- Poor "executive functioning" (the ability to understand information and use it to make decisions)
- Trouble focusing or paying attention
- Problems with "working memory" (the ability to use information immediately after learning it).

Schizophrenia is thought to be a result of a genetic predisposition with an environmental exposures and / or stresses during pregnancy or childhood that contribute to or trigger the disorder.

The earlier that schizophrenia is diagnosed and treated the better the outcome of the person and the better the recovery.

Better medications and new ways of treating schizophrenia are enabling people with schizophrenia to live in society instead of institutions.

Many people with schizophrenia can lead rewarding and meaningful lives in their communities.

Four out of ten people with schizophrenia attempt suicide with 10% dying by suicide.

After 10 years, of the people diagnosed with schizophrenia:

- 25% Completely Recover
- 25% Much Improved, relatively independent
- 25% Improved, but require extensive support network
- 15% Hospitalized, unimproved
- 10% Dead (Mostly Suicide)

Where are the People with Schizophrenia?

Approximately:

- 6% are homeless or live in shelters
- 6% live in jails or prisons
- 5% to 6% live in Hospitals
- 10% live in Nursing homes
- 25% live with a family member
- 28% are living independently
- 20% live in Supervised Housing (group homes, etc.)

Schizophrenia accounts for a fourth of all mental health costs and takes up one in three psychiatric hospital beds.

Schizophrenia ranks among the top 10 causes of disability in developed countries worldwide

Violence is not a symptom of schizophrenia. People with schizophrenia are far more likely to harm themselves than be violent toward the public.

Drug or alcohol abuse raises the risk of violence in people with schizophrenia.

If a parent has schizophrenia, the chance for a child to have the disorder is 10 to 15 percent.

Alcohol dependence is four times more likely to occur among adults with mental illness than among adults with no mental illness.

Addiction to nicotine is the most common form of substance abuse in people with schizophrenia.

Because the causes of schizophrenia are still unknown, treatments focus on eliminating the symptoms of the illness. Treatments include antipsychotic medications and various psychosocial treatments.

Psychosocial treatments help patients deal with the everyday challenges of the illness, such as difficulty with communication, self-care, work, and forming and keeping relationships.

Many people with schizophrenia do not take medication due to side effects. Side effects may include:

- Drowsiness
- Dizziness when changing positions
- Blurred vision
- Rapid heartbeat
- Sensitivity to the sun
- Skin rashes
- Rigidity
- Persistent muscle spasms
- Tremors
- Restlessness
- Loss of libido

Many people with schizophrenia improve enough to lead independent, satisfying lives.

Schizophrenia is treatable and recovery possible!