Schizophrenia

What is it?
Schizophrenia is a disease that makes it hard to think clearly, manage emotions, and interact with other people. It can cause:

- Delusions. These are beliefs that are not real.
- Hallucinations. These are things that you may see or hear that are not really there.
- Paranoia. This is the belief that others are lying, cheating, using you, or trying to harm you.

The disease may change your ability to enjoy life, express emotions, or function. At times, you may hear voices, behave strangely, have trouble speaking or understanding speech, or keep to yourself.

The goal of treatment is to lower your stress and help your brain function normally. You may need lifelong treatment with medicines and counseling to keep your schizophrenia under control.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It’s also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Be safe with medicines. Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine. When you feel good, you may think that you do not need your medicines. But it is important to keep taking them as scheduled.
- Go to your counseling sessions. Call and talk with your counselor if you can't attend or if you don't think the sessions are helping. Do not just stop going.
- Eat a healthy diet. Talk with a dietitian about what type of diet may be best for you.
- Do not use alcohol or illegal drugs.

What should you do if someone in your family has schizophrenia?

- Learn about the disease and how it may get worse over time.
- Remind your family member that you love him or her.
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- Make a plan with all family members about how to take care of your loved one when his or her symptoms are bad.
- Talk about your fears and concerns and those of other family members. Seek counseling if needed.
- Do not focus attention only on the person who is in treatment.
- Remind yourself that it will take time for changes to occur.
- Do not blame yourself for the disease.
- Know your legal rights and the legal rights of your family member.
- Take care of yourself. Stay involved with your own interests, such as your career, hobbies, and friends. Use exercise, positive self-talk, relaxation, and deep breathing to help lower your stress.
- Give yourself time to grieve. You may need to deal with emotions such as anger, fear, and frustration. After you work through your feelings, you will be better able to care for yourself and your family.
- If you are having a hard time with your feelings and your interactions with your family member, talk with a counselor.

When should you call for help?

Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:
- You are thinking about suicide or are threatening suicide.
- You feel like hurting yourself or someone else.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:
- You hear voices.
- You think someone is trying to harm you.
- You cannot concentrate or are easily confused.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:
- You are having trouble taking care of yourself.
- You cannot attend your counseling sessions.

For more information go to:
- [kp.org/santaclara/bhc](http://kp.org/santaclara/bhc)
- [Schizophrenia - Mental health and emotional wellness](http://kp.org/santaclara/bhc)

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