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## Is there a cure for schizophrenia?

- > There's no cure right now, but effective medications can help relieve the symptoms and play a critical role in managing the disease.
- > Researchers are learning more and more about schizophrenia and what causes it. This work is leading to earlier intervention, new treatments, and new ways to identify people with schizophrenia before the disease does a lot of harm.

## What's it like to live with schizophrenia?

- > Schizophrenia can affect a person's ability to earn an income, find housing, and be part of the community. But the earlier someone gets treatment, the better life will be.
- > Stereotypes and myths about schizophrenia can cause stigma, making people with the disease feel ashamed or embarrassed. When the public better understands the disease, they'll be much more compassionate.
- > Most people with schizophrenia live at home with their family members. This can cause a lot of stress, so it's important that family members have support, too.
- > Even though there's a lot of hope for people with schizophrenia, it's still a terrible disease that can have serious consequences. About 40% of people with schizophrenia will try to commit suicide.

## Where can we go for help?

The Schizophrenia Society of Ontario is here to help. We're a family-based organization that understands what it's like to live with schizophrenia. Our objectives are to:

- > provide family support and education
- > promote public awareness and understanding
- > advocate for better legislation and services for people with schizophrenia
- > promote research into the causes, treatment and cure of schizophrenia

Founded by Bill Jefferies in 1979, the SSO has chapters across Ontario. These local groups provide support and education for families, and organize community events to help raise awareness about schizophrenia. They can put you in touch with services and programs in your area.

Contact the provincial office or visit our website for the name of a chapter leader near you.



more info:



For further information, please contact us at:

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The Schizophrenia Society of Ontario has chapters across the province to serve you. Please check our website for chapter information.

*This information should not be used as a substitute for the advice of a professional. Consult a physician or a lawyer to discuss your individual facts and circumstances.*

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# Schizophrenia Get the Facts



## Schizophrenia: Get the Facts

You've probably heard the word **schizophrenia** before, but how much do you really know about it? If you've just learned that you or someone you love has schizophrenia, you're probably scared.

This brochure will help you sort through the facts and suggest where you can go for more support and information.

### What is schizophrenia?

- > Schizophrenia is a serious, treatable brain disease. It makes it hard for someone to tell the difference between what's real and what's not real.
- > People with schizophrenia can have trouble thinking logically. Their emotional responses to people and events may seem odd. They may behave in a strange way when they're around other people or in public.
- > Schizophrenia is **not** split personality or the result of bad parenting. It's **not** a character flaw or a moral weakness.
- > People with schizophrenia have a chronic disease just like diabetes or Alzheimer's.

### How does someone know if he has schizophrenia?

- > Unfortunately, many people are diagnosed with schizophrenia only after they have had a "psychotic episode," a serious event where the person has trouble distinguishing between what is real and what is not.
- > Psychosis can come on suddenly or can develop very gradually. Symptoms of psychosis can vary from person to person and may change over time. The individual may have hallucinations or hear voices.
- > During a psychotic episode, the person may believe that he is being threatened or is in danger and has to do something to stop it.
- > "Early intervention" programs, which target people in the beginning stages of the illness, can lead to a better treatment outcome. So it's important to get help early.

### Who gets schizophrenia?

- > 1 in 100 people will develop schizophrenia during his lifetime. In Canada, that's about 300,000 people.
- > Schizophrenia affects people in every cultural and economic group.
- > It most often strikes a person during their late teens or early 20s.
- > Schizophrenia is a brain disease, and it's hard to predict who will develop it. But scientists are getting close to finding a gene (or genes) for schizophrenia. That may eventually help them identify people with the disease before it actually causes harm.
- > Schizophrenia is no one's fault. You couldn't have prevented it.



## What are the symptoms of schizophrenia?

Schizophrenia can take years to develop. During that time a person may experience any of these symptoms:

- > feel depressed
- > feel anxious, upset, or panicky
- > have difficulty thinking and concentrating
- > show little or no emotion
- > be confused about what's real and what's imaginary
- > feel threatened, suspicious, or believe that people are "out to get me"
- > avoid contact with other people
- > hear voices or sounds that aren't there
- > see people or things that aren't there
- > use words that don't make sense
- > suddenly be obsessed with something, such as religion
- > be angry with or scared of loved ones, for no reason
- > have difficulty doing things at work or school

### Can it be treated?

- > Yes. Schizophrenia is treatable.
- > Medication is the foundation of treatment. And, fortunately, many of the newer drugs have few side effects. This means people with schizophrenia can have a much better quality of life than they would have a few years ago. Doctors work closely with patients to find the right drug and just the right amount for each person.
- > It's important that people who show symptoms of schizophrenia be diagnosed as soon as possible. This gives them a much better chance at recovery.
- > People recovering from schizophrenia often benefit from the services of a case manager or therapist.
- > People with schizophrenia also need support in their community, like safe and affordable housing and social and training programs. They will probably need help to understand their illness.
- > Family members of people with schizophrenia also need support, education, and counselling. They are an important part of the person's treatment and overall plan toward recovery.

