

SCHIZOPHRENIA



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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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WHAT IS SCHIZOPHRENIA?

Schizophrenia is a disorder characterized by a breakdown in thought processes and severe emotional disturbance.

1 in every 100 people worldwide are affected by it. It typically begins between the ages 16 and 25 years.

WHAT ARE SYMPTOMS?

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- Delusions (false, irrational ideas)
- Hallucinations (hearing voices is the most common)
- Disorganized thinking and speech
- Inappropriate behaviour
- Agitation
- Lack of emotional responsiveness
- Lack of enthusiasm
- Lack of initiative
- Reduced social interaction

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WHAT ARE THE EARLY SIGNS FOR SCHIZOPHRENIA?

- Bizarre behaviour
- Irrational statements
- Talking to self
- Social withdrawal, isolation, and reclusiveness
- Inability to cry or express joy, or excessive crying
- Shift in basic personality
- Unexpected hostility and suspiciousness
- Deterioration of personal hygiene and self-care
- Peculiar use of words or odd language structures
- Excessive writing without meaning
- Strange posturing
- Dropping out of activities
- Extreme reactions to criticism
- Unusual sensitivity to stimuli (noise, light, colours, textures)

- Hyperactivity, inactivity or alternating between the two
- Sleeping excessively or inability to sleep
- Inability to concentrate or to cope with minor problems
- Refusal to touch persons or objects; wearing gloves, etc.
- Staring without blinking - or blinking incessantly

WHAT CAUSES SCHIZOPHRENIA?

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- **Biochemistry** – Imbalances in neurotransmitters, particularly dopamine, serotonin and norepinephrine
- **Cerebral Blood Flow** – difficulty "coordinating" activity between different areas of the brain.
- **Molecular Biology** - irregular pattern of certain brain cells.
- **Genetic Predisposition** – schizophrenia sometimes runs in families.
- **Stress** – While stress does not cause schizophrenia, it makes symptoms worse.

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HOW IS IT TREATED?

- Early medical intervention to restore neurotransmitter balance
- Residential and Rehabilitation programs to provide social skills training, recreational and vocational opportunities
- Family therapy to foster a supportive family environment, thus preventing relapse

Answers by Dr Samir Parikh - samir.parikh@fortishealthcare.com