



## Schizophrenia

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Schizophrenia is often misunderstood by the people who suffer from the illness and the public at large. Proper diagnosis, medical treatment and continuous counseling are essential to the recovery process. There is no known cure for schizophrenia, but with focused care, many people can successfully manage the illness and lead productive, healthy lives.

Nearly 2.4 million adults suffer from schizophrenia, which usually presents itself in the late teens and early twenties, and often later for women.(1) The World Health Organization classifies schizophrenia as one of the top ten most debilitating diseases affecting humans.(2)

The most identifying symptom of schizophrenia is an inability to distinguish between reality and fantasy. This can be in the form of delusions, paranoia and hallucinations. One of the largest barriers to treating schizophrenia is that one of the symptoms is an inability to recognize the illness exists. This makes family involvement crucial to successful management of the disease. Other symptoms include extreme highs and lows as those with bipolar disorder experience.

Another barrier to recovery is public perception of the illness, which has been highly stigmatized. This makes educating the family and the community an essential part of combating this illness. The most effective treatment of schizophrenia is antipsychotic medication. Antipsychotics help relieve the symptoms of schizophrenia by correcting an imbalance in the chemicals that enable brain cells to communicate.

Because clients tend to distrust people and lack a self-awareness of the disease, continued management of the illness will require multiple interventions from the family and community.

1. Robins LN, Regier DA, eds. Psychiatric disorders in America: the Epidemiologic Catchment Area Study. New York: The Free Press, 1991.

2. National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

For more information about Schizophrenia, see [Health Education Answers](#).