

Schizophrenia

What is Schizophrenia?

Schizophrenia is a mental health condition that causes a range of different psychological symptoms. These include hallucinations, hearing or seeing things that do not exist, and delusions (believing in things that are untrue).

Hallucinations and delusions are often referred to as psychotic symptoms, or symptoms of psychosis. Psychosis is when somebody is unable to distinguish between reality and their imagination.

Schizophrenia is one of the most common serious mental health conditions. One in 100 people will experience at least one episode of acute schizophrenia during their lifetime. Men and women are equally affected by the condition.

The exact cause of schizophrenia is unknown. However, most experts believe that the condition is caused by a combination of genetic and environmental factors.

If you feel that you are having a mental health issue speak to [your doctor or GP](#). Read more about [mental health support in Newcastle](#) and [emergency or crisis mental health support](#) on InformationNOW.

Symptoms

The symptoms of schizophrenia are usually classified into one of two categories – positive or negative.

- **Positive symptoms** – symptoms that represent a change in behaviour or thoughts, such as hallucinations or delusions.
- **Negative symptoms** – symptoms that represent the reduction or total lack of thoughts or functions that you would usually expect to see in a healthy person. For example, people with schizophrenia often appear emotionless, flat and apathetic.

Negative symptoms are not usually as dramatic as positive symptoms but they can be harder to treat. People often have episodes of acute schizophrenia, during which their positive symptoms are particularly severe, followed by periods where they experience few or no positive symptoms.

The initial symptoms of an acute schizophrenic episode can vary from person to person but the most commonly reported symptoms include:

- Loss of appetite
- Anxiety
- Sleeping problems
- Beginning to neglect your personal hygiene and household chores
- Beginning to feel increasingly suspicious and fearful about other people
- Beginning to hear voices which make it increasingly difficult to concentrate

If you are concerned that your schizophrenia symptoms may be getting worse you should contact your GP.

Positive symptoms of schizophrenia

Hallucinations – A hallucination is when you think that you perceive something that does not exist in reality. Hallucinations can occur in any of the five senses, but the most commonly reported hallucination in schizophrenia is hearing voices.

Delusions – A delusion is having an unshakeable belief in something that is very unlikely, bizarre or obviously untrue. One of the most common delusions experienced in schizophrenia is paranoid delusions, for example belief that something, or someone, is deliberately trying to mislead, manipulate, hurt or, in some cases, even kill you.

Other common types of delusion are delusions of grandeur and attaching undue and misguided significance to everyday events. For example, you may start to think that songs being played on the radio are actually about you or that newspaper headlines are being used to send you secret messages.

Behavioural problems – During an intense schizophrenic episode, the combination of hallucinations and delusions can cause a person to act in an unusual and bizarre manner. For example, a person may cover all their windows in tin-foil because they believe that this will prevent their thoughts from being controlled by the government.

Disordered thoughts – People with schizophrenia often complain that their thinking has become confused, muddled or disorganised. They may struggle with concentration, their performance at work or college may suffer and even the simplest tasks, such as reading a newspaper article or sending an email, can become incredibly difficult.

Negative symptoms of schizophrenia

The negative symptoms of schizophrenia can often begin to manifest themselves several years before somebody experiences their first acute schizophrenic episode.

A lack, or 'flattening', of emotions – your voice can become dull and monotonous, and your face takes on a constant blank appearance.

An inability to enjoy things that you used to enjoy.

Apathy – you have no motivation to follow through on any plans and neglect household chores, such as washing the dishes or cleaning your clothes.

Becoming increasingly uncommunicative – you may find it hard or become reluctant to speak to people.

The negative symptoms of schizophrenia can often lead to relationship problems with friends and family because they can sometimes mistake them for deliberate laziness or rudeness.

Treatment

Medical

Schizophrenia is treated using a combination of medical treatments such as anti-psychotic medicines, and psychological interventions such as cognitive behavioural therapy.

Recognising the initial signs of an acute schizophrenic episode can be very useful. It may be possible to prevent a full-blown schizophrenic episode through the use of anti-psychotic medicines and counselling.

Self care

Many people who are diagnosed with schizophrenia are able to live happy and fulfilling lives, even if they continue to experience symptoms. It can help to:

- [look after your physical health](#)
 - try to cut down on stress
 - [do things you enjoy](#)
 - maintain relationships
 - use peer support (see below)
 - look out for warning signs
 - plan for more difficult times
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Local support services

Read more about [local Mental health support services](#) on InformationNOW.

[Tyneside and Northumberland Mind](#) has a telephone support line which offers listening, practical and emotional support to anyone over 16. It's open 7 days a week 8am to 10pm.

[Patient Information Centre](#) have a range of [free mental health guides](#) to download and [relaxation techniques](#) that can help relieve stress and gain a sense of wellbeing. Available in both male and female voices. The self help leaflets cover a range of topics such as: abuse, low mood, panic, post natal depression, alcohol, anxiety, eating disorders, controlling anger, stress, self harm and depression, sleep problems, depression in prisoners and post traumatic stress

[Mental Health services 24 hours support](#) where to find support in an emergency or crisis situation

[Tyneside Women's Health](#) promotes the positive mental health and emotional well-being of women through various groups and activities.

Newcastle Libraries run the 'Reading Well Books on Prescription' scheme. The collection provides books available to borrow to help you manage your mental wellbeing. The books deal with issues such as anger, anxiety, fear, panic, worry, assertiveness, confidence, self-esteem, depression, eating disorders, fatigue and pain

EveryTurn Mental Health provides a wide range of specialist mental health services, including some commissioned by the NHS and local authorities.

ReCoCo: The Recovery College College run various peer-led support groups, and free educational and creative courses, which are open to anyone who would find them helpful in their recovery from mental illness, substance misuse, trauma or distress.

Newcastle Talking Helps – can help people with problems such as depression, anxiety, stress, anger, fears, bereavement and relationship difficulties.

Other Useful Organisations

- [Understanding schizophrenia](#) from **MIND**
- [Re Think Mental Illness](#)
- [SANE](#)
- [Health Talk.org Online](#)
- [Mental Health Foundation](#)
- [Mental Health Matters](#)

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Useful Organisations

Tyneside Womens Health

Email: enquiries@tynesidewomenshealth.org.uk

Website: www.tynesidewomenshealth.org.uk

Telephone: 0191 477 7898

Address: Wilfred Street, NE6 1JQ

Tyneside and Northumberland Mind

Email: admin@tynesidemind.org.uk

Website: www.tynesidemind.org.uk

Telephone: 0191 477 4545

Address: Tyneside and Northumberland Mind, NE16UF

EveryTurn Mental Health

Email: enquiries@everyturn.org

Website: <https://www.everyturn.org/>

Telephone: 0191 217 0377

Address: Everyturn Mental Health, NE13 9BA

SANE

Email: support@sane.org.uk

Website: www.sane.org.uk

Telephone: 0191 217 0377

Address: St. Mark's Studios, N7 8QJ

Re Think Mental Illness

Email: info@rethink.org

Website: www.rethink.org

Telephone: 0121 522 7007

Address: 15th Floor, SE1 7GR

Mental Health Foundation

Website: www.mentalhealth.org.uk

Telephone: 020 7803 1100

Address: Colechurch House, SE1 2SX

Mental Health Matters

Email: info@mhm.org.uk

Website: www.mhm.org.uk

Telephone: 0191 273 4614

Address: MHM Central Office, Avalon House, SR5 3XJ

ReCoCo: The Recovery College Collective

Email: info@recoverycoco.com

Website: <http://www.recoverycoco.com/>

Telephone: 0191 261 0948

Address: 1 Carlisl Square, NE1 6UF

Hearing Voices Network

Email: nhvn@hotmail.co.uk

Website: <https://www.hearing-voices.org/>

Telephone: 0114 271 8210

Address: c/o Sheffield Hearing Voices Network, S6 2PE

Newcastle Libraries

Email: information@newcastle.gov.uk

Website: www.newcastle.gov.uk/leisure-libraries-and-tourism/libraries

Telephone: 0191 278 7878

Address: Newcastle City Library, NE1 8AX

healthtalk.org

Email: info@healthtalkonline.org

Website: www.healthtalk.org

Telephone: 0191 278 7878

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