



MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTRE MANITOBA

Fact Sheet | Schizophrenia

Support for Family and Friends

What is schizophrenia and what are the symptoms?

Schizophrenia is not a single, distinct illness, but instead a psychiatric diagnosis with various symptoms found on the schizophrenia spectrum. There's no single lab test or brain scan for schizophrenia. Doctors will explore symptoms on the symptom if there are no medical conditions, mental illness or substance use issues that could be causing signs of the illness. Some symptoms include hallucinations, delusions, depression, disorganized thinking, and concentration issues. For some, schizophrenia can be debilitating and disabling, and the degree will vary. People can have mild to severe symptoms. It is different for everybody, and everybody has their own unique kind of schizophrenia. Lastly, schizophrenia is a treatable mental disorder or illness.

What is the cause?

While potential causes are still unknown, experts agree that several vulnerabilities can set the stage, including genetics, prenatal infection or birth complications, abnormal brain structure or chemistry, trauma, cognitive impairment, and environmental stressors.

Is there a cure? Will it go away?

- There is no cure for schizophrenia, however people with schizophrenia can recover, symptomatically and/or functionally, and that sense of psychological well-being can return. Everybody has the potential to recover.
- Recovery is a personal journey that will be different for each person and can include incremental change such as medication changes, personal growth, finding a purpose and holding a job, or becoming a volunteer in their community. Recovery means finding your potential and living a full life. People experiencing the challenges of depression may also live with anxiety (nervousness, fears, worries) or with substance misuse (alcohol or drugs) or behaviours like problem gambling or excessive shopping.

How is it treated?

Treatment for schizophrenia will vary from person to person and can include counselling or therapy, medication, peer support, support groups, among many choices. Staying connected with family, friends, and supports can be important in over-coming the stigma and isolation of coping with a mental illness.

How long will it take for my loved one to feel healthy again?

It varies. Feeling healthy again really does depend on the extent of the person's illness, and on how they incorporate supports in their life.

How do I get my loved one the best care and help?

- Friends and family members can no doubt experience great difficulty, stress, distress, anxiety, and helplessness if they find themselves in a situation where their loved one is suffering and needs help. It is difficult to navigate a system when your loved one is not able to recognize or identify that they may need help.
- You can encourage and support your loved one to seek help and potential diagnosis and engage in any number of treatment strategies from a family doctor, psychiatrist, psychologist, counsellor, social worker, community mental health worker, career development counsellor, or peer support worker, with whom they can work with for the short or long term. We recognize the difficult journey that friends and family members are on, the weight that they bear, the responsibilities that they have, while recognizing that the individual who lives with schizophrenia has autonomy and ultimately must agree or want to seek the diagnosis.

- Early intervention and treatment can help your loved one. Symptoms are typically first recognized in the late teens and early twenties. While boys are 40% more likely than girls to be diagnosed, girls are more likely to be diagnosed at an older age.

What can I do to support my loved one?

Your loved one is going to recover at their own pace. You can ask them how you can support them, what they need and want from you. Such assistance can include:

- Finding them with financial and/or housing resources.
- Connecting them with medical and mental health supports.
- Connecting them with community resources, including peer support.
- Exploring where they can speak for themselves and where they need support.
- Seeing your loved one as a person; affirming them in terms of their expressed desires.
- Asking about the person's hopes and dreams; not focusing on their mental illness.
- Attempting to maintain a relationship with them; not abandoning or isolating from them.

Why is it so hard?

Supporting someone through a crisis or challenge takes a toll on everyone involved. Compassion fatigue is a well-known obstacle that faces caregivers of all kinds. Left undermanaged, stress and fatigue can result in a host of challenges with focus, motivation, energy levels, and personal enjoyment. Even as the caregiver, it can be important to take stock of your own well-being. Practicing self-care can reduce the challenging effects on ourselves and increase our ability to support our loved ones. There are a number of resources available for supports and caregivers.



Resources

Financial & Housing

CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Manitoba and Winnipeg | 204-982-6100 | mbwpg.cmha.ca

DISABILITY TAX CREDIT (DTC)

1-855-330-3305 | canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/individuals/segments/tax-credits-deductions-persons-disabilities/disability-tax-credit.html

EDEN HEALTH CARE SERVICES

1-888-617-7715 | edenhealthcare.ca

REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES

204-926-7000 | gov.mb.ca/health/rha/index.html

MANITOBA HOUSING

1-800-661-4663 | gov.mb.ca/housing

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME ASSISTANCE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (EIA DISABILITY)

1-877-812-0014 | gov.mb.ca/fs/eia/eia_disability.html

REGISTERED DISABILITY SAVINGS PLAN (RDSP)

1-800-622-6232 | canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/disability/savings.html

Community & Peer Support

MOOD DISORDERS ASSOCIATION OF MANITOBA

1-800-263-1460 | mooddisordersmanitoba.ca

PEER CONNECTIONS MANITOBA

1-204-786-1616 | peerconnectionsmb.ca

ANXIETY DISORDERS ASSOCIATION OF MANITOBA

1-800-805-8885 | adam.mb.ca



Psychiatry & Psychology

CRISIS RESPONSE CENTRE

204-940-1781 | sharedhealthmb.ca/services/mental-health/crisis-response-centre

CRISIS STABILIZATION UNIT

204-940-3633 | sharedhealthmb.ca/services/mental-health/crisis-stabilization-unit

MANITOBA PSYCHOLOGY SOCIETY

204-488-7398 | mps.ca

MANITOBA TRAUMA INFORMATION AND EDUCATION CENTRE

204-784-4099 | trauma-informed.ca

Referral from family doctor or local regional health authority

Free Counselling

KLINIC COMMUNITY HEALTH

204-784-4090 | klinik.mb.ca

COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

204-788-8330 | wrha.mb.ca/mental-health/community-mental-health-worker

WOMEN'S HEALTH CLINIC

1-866-947-1517 | womenshealthclinic.org/what-we-do/counselling/counselling-resources