

SCHIZOPHRENIA FACT SHEET

What is Schizophrenia?

- Schizophrenia is a lifelong illness that may cause unusual or disturbed thoughts, moods and behavior¹
- The name “schizophrenia” comes from the Greek words “schizo,” which means “split,” and “phrene,” which means “mind”¹
- However, people with the disease do not actually have a split personality.² Instead, it is more accurate to think of them as being out of touch with reality¹

Prevalence

- Schizophrenia affects nearly two and a half million Americans, or 1.1 percent of the U.S. population^{3*}
- Schizophrenia affects men, women and all races equally⁴
- Age of onset is earlier for men (late teens/early adulthood) and later for women (late 20s/early 30s)⁵ – often in the prime of one’s life

What Causes Schizophrenia?

- While no one knows exactly why some people get schizophrenia, it is thought to be a combination of genetic and environmental factors¹
- Studies have shown that children who have one parent with schizophrenia have a five to six percent chance of developing the disease; or a 46 percent risk if both parents have it²
- An important part of understanding schizophrenia is learning how the workings of the brain can affect the way the disease reveals itself and the way it changes over time⁶
- Scientists have thought that too much or too little of certain chemicals in the brain, such as dopamine and serotonin, may contribute to the appearance of schizophrenia symptoms²

Symptoms

- Schizophrenia is characterized by symptoms such as hallucinations, delusions, disorganized thinking, lack of emotion, lack of energy, as well as problems with memory, attention and the ability to plan, organize and make decisions⁷

Impact and Cost to Society

- The total cost of schizophrenia in the U.S. is estimated to be \$62.7 billion (including \$22.7 billion in direct healthcare costs)⁸
- In the U.S., schizophrenia costs more than all cancers combined⁹
- Schizophrenia is the 9th leading cause of disability worldwide¹⁰
- The direct costs of treating schizophrenia, including hospital stays and medicines, are mainly because the disease afflicts people at a young age, lasts a lifetime and leaves them often unable to take care of themselves¹¹
- Poor medication adherence costs the U.S. economy \$300 billion a year,¹² and accounts for 1.5 to 3 percent of all healthcare costs,¹³ and up to 22 percent of all mental healthcare costs¹⁴
- At any given time, there are more people with untreated severe psychiatric illnesses who are homeless than are receiving care in hospitals¹⁵

Treatment

- Even though schizophrenia is a lifelong disease, treatment and recovery are possible through various targeted approaches, including use of medication and support services, allowing people to lead more productive lives¹
 - Medication: Schizophrenia is most commonly treated with antipsychotics—medicines that help lessen the symptoms of schizophrenia¹⁶
 - Social and Family Support: This may include day programs involving socialization and skill building, support groups or family therapy. This assistance may help people stick to their medicine schedule, learn social skills, get important advice about ways to live a full

*Calculated by extrapolating from the 2008 United States Census Bureau population estimates.

life despite their disease and find encouragement along the way.¹⁷ Family and friends can play an important role in helping a loved one with schizophrenia stay on track with their medicines.¹ Training programs that teach family and friends problem solving and communication skills can improve their relationship with the loved one and lessen the chance of relapse¹

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