

Schizophrenia: The Myths and the Facts

Schizophrenia is often a misunderstood mental illness. As part of our observance of Schizophrenia Awareness Week, May 16-22, we would like to provide facts that address some of the myths and misconceptions about schizophrenia.

Myth: Schizophrenia is hopeless; people who have it never recover.

Fact: While there is no cure for schizophrenia, there are effective treatments. Medications, recovery-oriented psychosocial treatments and rehabilitation practices are increasingly helping people with schizophrenia to lead productive, successful and independent lives.

Myth: Hallucinations (seeing, hearing or experiencing things that others do not) and paranoia are the only symptoms of schizophrenia.

Fact: Schizophrenia is a brain-based disorder, so in addition to hallucinations, it affects multiple brain functions, such as the ability to think clearly, manage emotions, make decisions and relate to others. People with schizophrenia may also have delusions, which are firmly held false beliefs that may cause them to think that people are following them or looking at them.

Myth: People affected by schizophrenia are dangerous.

Fact: Studies indicate that people receiving treatment for schizophrenia are no more dangerous than the rest of the population. More typically, individuals with schizophrenia are withdrawn and prefer to be left alone. People with schizophrenia are more likely to be victims of violence than perpetrators. However, people with schizophrenia and alcohol or other drug abuse, or those who do not participate in treatment, are at increased risk of committing violent acts.

Myth: People with schizophrenia have split or multiple personalities.

Fact: Schizophrenia is not a split personality disorder. The myth of people with schizophrenia having a split personality may have come about because the word schizophrenia comes from Greek words that mean "split mind." The split is referring to a split from reality – not a split or multiple personality.

Myth: People get schizophrenia because they had bad parenting as children or because they have weak character or personalities.

Fact: Schizophrenia is a brain-based disorder. It is not the result of *anyone's* weakness or character flaws.

Action: Schizophrenia will not go away of its own accord; early intervention is very important and can improve the outcome for recovery. If you know of someone who is experiencing symptoms of schizophrenia, please encourage them to get professional help as soon as possible. Please use Ohio Department of Mental Health's "[Where to get help](#)" to find treatment providers near you.

More Information:

Best Practices in Schizophrenia Treatment (BeST) Center, Department of Psychiatry, Northeastern Ohio Universities Colleges of Medicine and Pharmacy
<http://www.neoucom.edu/bestcenter>

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) – Schizophrenia
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/schizophrenia/index.shtml>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) - Schizophrenia
<http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/ken98-0052/default.asp>

Schizophrenia.com
<http://www.schizophrenia.com/>

www.OF-1-MIND.org

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