Schizophrenia Facts

What Is Schizophrenia?

Schizophrenia is a complex mental health condition with a range of symptoms that affect a person's thoughts, emotions, and behavior. It is a lifelong brain disorder that interferes with a person's ability to live independently.

With treatment, the symptoms of schizophrenia may reduce substantially and stay reduced for long periods. The risk of self-harm and violence toward others is greatest when the mental health condition is untreated.

Most people with schizophrenia are not violent. Overall, people with schizophrenia are more likely than those without the mental health condition to be harmed by others.

Common Symptoms of Schizophrenia

Schizophrenic symptoms can differ from person to person. Many of these symptoms are shared with other mental and physical disorders. Symptoms of schizophrenia are categorized in three ways—positive, negative, and cognitive:

- Positive symptoms, also known as psychosis, include delusions, hallucinations, and disorganized thinking.
- Negative symptoms include detachment, withdrawal, inability to express emotions, and apathy (lack of motivation).
- Cognitive symptoms include problems with attention, concentration, and memory.

Supporting Documentation in the Medical Record

A diagnosis of schizophrenia can only be made by a qualified health professional. Supporting documentation in the medical record should include, but is not limited to, a psychiatric evaluation, a physical examination, and relevant tests and screenings to help rule out other possible causes of symptoms. Regular audits, especially upon admission, should confirm that this documentation is complete, timely, and accurate.



Older adults rarely have a new diagnosis of schizophrenia.

Health Services Advisory Group (HSAG) is the West Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organization (QIN-QIO) Region 7.

Sources: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), World Health Organization (WHO), and the American Psychiatry Association.

This material was prepared by the Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health in Nursing Facilities. This work is made possible by grant number 1H79SM087155 from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. August 2025. This material has been adapted with permission by Health Services Advisory Group (HSAG), a Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organization (QIN-QIO) under contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Views expressed in this material do not necessarily reflect the official views or policy of CMS or HHS, and any reference to a specific product or entity herein does not constitute endorsement of that product or entity by CMS or HHS. Publication No. QN-13SOW-XC-09222026-12