



# MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

## SCHIZOPHRENIA

### DID YOU KNOW?

Schizophrenia is a disease that severely affects thoughts and perceptions. Approximately one percent of Americans experience the disorder in their lifetime.

The disease usually develops between the ages of 13 and 25, with males slightly more at risk.

**A variety of factors contribute to schizophrenia.** Genetics are one cause. However, the interaction between genes and environmental factors (e.g., exposure to viruses or malnutrition in the womb) and psychosocial factors (e.g., a stressful environment) lead to increased risk of development.

### Common symptoms include:

- *Delusions* – false beliefs of persecution, guilt, special mission or exalted birth, or being under outside control
- *Hallucinations* – false perceptions that most commonly involve hearing voices, but can also include seeing, feeling, tasting or smelling things that are not real
- *Thinking difficulties* – difficulties with concentration, memory and ability to plan that make it more difficult for a person to reason, communicate and complete daily tasks
- *Loss of drive* – lack of motivation, even for self-care
- *Blunted emotions* – lack of emotions or inappropriate affect
- *Social withdrawal* – avoidance of others, likely due to loss of social skills or fear of interacting with others

**Treatment works to manage schizophrenia.** The most common treatments include antipsychotic medications, ‘talk therapy’ and support groups. A combination of these treatments generally works best to help people recover. If you or a loved one shows signs, seek help from your community behavioral healthcare center.

Visit [www.thenationalcouncil.org](http://www.thenationalcouncil.org) to find a community behavioral health center near you.