

A Guide for Consumers

Understanding Schizophrenia

Relapse

The Basic of Schizophrenia Relapse

If you have had a relapse, you are not alone. Most people with schizophrenia have at least one relapse, and many have had more than one. Schizophrenia is not your fault! To help manage relapse, you should understand what a relapse is and potential warning signs that lead up to it.

What Is a Relapse?

Relapse is when your symptoms of schizophrenia get worse after a period of doing better. This could mean:

- Hearing, seeing, or sensing things that others do not (for example, delusions and hallucinations)
- Having unusual thoughts or beliefs that are untrue (for example, about fame, power, wealth, and abilities)
- Thinking, speaking, or behaving in a way that is chaotic, confused, and does not make sense to others; this can lead to agitation, anger, disorganized speech, and not being able to follow conversations
- Not trusting other people



Schizophrenia is not your fault!

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Recognizing Signs of a Relapse

Because each person is unique, the symptoms of schizophrenia can be very different from 1 person to the next. And schizophrenia symptoms can also change over time. This may make recognizing a relapse difficult. But, if you notice any of the symptoms listed above returning or getting worse, you may be having a relapse. Talk to your treatment team right away.

What Are Triggers?

Triggers are things that happen to us that may set off a chain reaction of uncomfortable or unhelpful behaviors, thoughts, or feelings. These triggers may lead to relapse. Each person's triggers are different.

Some triggers in mental illnesses such as schizophrenia may include:

- Feeling overwhelmed
- Physical illness
- Family problems
- The end of a relationship
- Experiencing a loss or trauma
- Financial problems
- Being judged or criticized

It is important to understand your triggers. Your treatment team can help you find ways to stay well.

Recognizing a relapse is sometimes difficult.



It is important to understand your triggers.



Managing Relapses

Your treatment team can help you put together a response plan before you have a relapse. When relapses do happen, a plan can help.

Some tips from other people with mental illnesses are:

- Knowing personal early warning signs
- Calling a treatment team member, friend, or family member when a relapse sign appears
- Having regular contact with treatment team members
- Going to talk therapy or support groups
- Accepting support from family and friends
- Taking medicine to control symptoms (exactly as prescribed by your doctor)

If you do notice that symptoms are starting to come back, tell someone on your treatment team right away. It is important to act quickly.

Telling your treatment team how you feel and if your medicines are working is important. They can give you information about your disease and medicine. They can also be there to help you.

There Is Hope for Managing Your Illness

Schizophrenia is a lifelong illness. Long-term help is needed to stay well and reduce your risk of relapse. Remember that, although setbacks and relapses can occur, take it 1 step at a time, 1 day at a time. You are not alone. Some tips that have helped others with mental illness are knowing your triggers and early warning signs, having a specific plan in place, managing your stress, and taking your medicine.

If you notice symptoms of a relapse, it is important to act quickly.



Have a plan in place, manage your stress, and take your medicine.



Resources

Here are some resources that can help you get more information about schizophrenia and staying well:

International Center for Clubhouse Development (ICCD) iccd.org

A multinational nonprofit organization that helps communities around the world create sustainable solutions for mental illness by developing and nurturing new and existing clubhouses.

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) nami.org

A United States mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.

Mental Health America (MHA) nmha.org

A community-based network, with affiliates across the United States, dedicated to helping all Americans live mentally healthy lives through advocacy, education, programs, and services.

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) nimh.nih.gov

A United States mental health organization focused on prevention, recovery, and cure of mental illnesses through basic and clinical research. The Institute also conducts research to help find optimal ways to provide available treatments and services directly to the community.

There are resources to get more information about schizophrenia.

Questions? Concerns?

Never hesitate to ask. You have a right to know everything about your health and your care.

If you have any questions or concerns about your condition or your care, ask your doctor or a member of your treatment team right away. They are there to help you.