



Schizophrenia

GTH: GATEWAY TO HOPE

What is Schizophrenia?

- Schizophrenia is a chronic and severe mental disorder that affects how a person thinks, feels, and behaves
- People with schizophrenia may seem like they have lost touch with reality and can be very disabling

Know the Symptoms

- **Positive symptoms** are psychotic behaviors where a person may “lose touch” with some aspects of reality
 - Symptoms include:
 - Hallucinations
 - Delusions
 - Unusual or dysfunctional ways of thinking
 - Agitated body movements

Know the Symptoms

- **Negative symptoms** are associated with disruptions to normal emotions and behaviors
 - Symptoms include:
 - Reduced expression of emotions with facial expressions or voice tone
 - Reduced feelings of pleasure in everyday life
 - Difficulty beginning and sustaining activities
 - Reduced speaking

Know the Symptoms

- **Cognitive symptoms** of schizophrenia can be subtle
 - When they are more severe, patients may notice changes in their memory or thinking
 - Symptoms include:
 - Poor “executive functioning” (the ability to understand information and use it to make decisions)
 - Trouble focusing or paying attention
 - Problems with “working memory” (the ability to use information immediately after learning it)

Risk Factors

- **Brain chemistry and structure:**
 - Problems during brain development before birth may lead to faulty connections
 - Imbalances in the chemical reactions of dopamine and glutamate in the brain plays a role in triggering psychotic symptoms due to genetics or brain differences

Risk Factors

- **Genes and environment:**
 - Interactions between genes and environmental factors are necessary for schizophrenia to develop
 - Environmental factors may involve:
 - Exposure to viruses
 - Malnutrition before birth
 - Problems during birth
 - Psychosocial factors

Treatments and Therapies

- **Antipsychotic medications**
 - Prescribed by doctors who work together with the patient to find the best medication strategy
- **Psychosocial treatments**
 - Help persons to learn and utilize coping skills to address the everyday challenges of schizophrenia while pursuing their life goals