

## Schizophrenia

Amerigroup Texas has a care program for schizophrenia. This program will help you know and manage your disease. We can assist you to set health goals and create a care plan that fits your way of life. You do not have to join the program. You are signed up as a member of Amerigroup.

## Living with schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is a disorder of the brain. It gets in the way of daily life.

We want you to know you can take control.

If you like, we will keep your doctor up to date. We will share your condition and the services we provide you. Your case manager can help you learn how to better handle your schizophrenia.

### Things to know:

- Doctors do not know the causes of schizophrenia
- The first signs may show up between the late teens and early thirties
- Here are some common symptoms you may have:
  1. Hearing or seeing things that aren't there
  2. Thinking other people can read your mind or control your thoughts
  3. Believing others want to hurt you
  4. Not knowing what is real or not real
  5. Finding it hard to take care of yourself
- We can give you more information to help you manage your schizophrenia

### How is schizophrenia treated?

There are many treatments that can help manage schizophrenia and reduce symptoms. They often include medications (meds) and some type of life skills or psychosocial therapy. Meds can greatly improve the lives of many people with the disorder. They can help decrease the symptoms so you are:

- Able to work
- Do everyday things
- Get along better with family and friends
- Know what is real and not real
- Able to take better care of yourself

Psychosocial treatments are another way of treating schizophrenia. You should first be stable on your meds for this treatment to work best. These treatments can help you deal with common symptoms of the disorder.

Psychosocial treatments include:

- **Rehabilitation** - These programs use social and work training to help you function better. Rehabilitation programs also include work counseling and money management. They show how to talk to people such as employers.
- **Family education** - Family is often very involved in supporting a relative who has schizophrenia. It is vital that family members know as much as possible about the disorder. This helps them watch for warning signs to help prevent episodes. They also can help and assist you in taking your meds right.
- **Behavioral therapy** - The therapist can teach you how to test if what you are thinking is real or not real. You can learn not to listen to your voices. You may also learn coping skills to help you manage your daily activities.
- **Supportive therapy** - A good relationship with a therapist or case manager can help you adjust to your illness. They can help with proper use of meds.

**How to take your schizophrenia meds:**

- If you are taking schizophrenia meds, do not drive until you know how your meds make you feel.
- Some common side effects are: restlessness, weight gain, muscle spasms and changes in your heart rate. You may have other side effects.
- People don't respond the same way to the same meds. Talk to your doctor before taking new meds. These include ones that don't need a prescription.
- Talk to your doctor about any concerns you have about your meds. Your doctor can help find meds that have the fewest side effects and will work for you.
- Your meds only work if taken daily as ordered by a doctor. It is vital to take your meds even when you feel better. Always follow your doctor's advice about the amount of meds to take and how often to take them.
- Talk with your doctor before stopping any meds.
- We can help you know how to take your meds the right way.
- We can help you learn how your meds work.

**Things you can do to help with your treatment:**

- Keep your appointments with your doctor and other health care providers.
- Take your medications as prescribed.
- Set reachable goals for yourself.
- Expect treatment to improve symptoms slowly, not all at once.

- Spend time with other people so you're not on your own. Try to share what you are going through with a trusted friend or relative.
- Let others help you.

### **Support to help you manage your schizophrenia:**

- We can help you talk to your family or caregiver about your schizophrenia
- We can help you find group programs and resources
- Tips to talk with your doctor and get the most out of your visit:
  1. Ask any questions you may have about your treatment. You can write them down and take them. Bring them with you to your visit.
  2. Follow your doctor's advice - if you have questions or concerns, let your doctor know.
  3. Make sure your doctor knows what meds you take.

### **Important screenings:**

- Depression
- Other health conditions
- Preventive care screenings such as wellness checkups, mammograms and Pap tests

### **If you feel like you want to hurt yourself**

Get help right away! You can call the toll-free, 24-hour hotline of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) or TTY: 1-800-799-4TTY (4889) to talk to a trained counselor. Friends or family should call the treating psychiatrist or therapist or 911 if a person with schizophrenia talks about or tries suicide.

### **For more helpful information on treating your schizophrenia**

- [The National Institute of Mental Health](http://www.nimh.nih.gov) at 1-866-615-6464 (TTY 1-866-415-8051)
- [Mental Health America](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net) at 1-800-969-NMHA (6642)
- [schizophrenia.com](http://www.schizophrenia.com)
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](http://www.nami.org)

Sources:

\* The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) Schizophrenia <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/schizophrenia/index.shtml>, accessed November 8, 2013.

\* National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

What is Schizophrenia

<https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions/Schizophrenia>, accessed November 8, 2013.

\* Publication: Schizophrenia

National Institute of Mental Health U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES •  
National Institutes of Health

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/schizophrenia-basics/index.shtml>

\*Healthfinder.gov

Use Medicines Safely

<http://www.healthfinder.gov/HealthTopics/Category/everyday-healthy-living/safety/use-medicines-safely>, accessed November 8, 2013.