



# Schizophrenia - Information for Families

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Schizophrenia is an often debilitating mental illness characterized by symptoms of a thought disorder. This illness may present a variety of symptoms, ranging from hallucinations (auditory hallucinations, such as "hearing voices", are most common, visual hallucinations are somewhat less common), delusions (including paranoia, thoughts of grandeur or special significance, etc), irrational thinking, and apathy or lack of motivation. For some general thoughts on dealing with a loved one's diagnosis of a mental illness such as schizophrenia, please see our ["Mental Illness - Information for Families"](#) page. In terms of treatment approaches, research to date suggests that the most effective treatment for schizophrenia is a continuum of care model, which has a focus on Social Rehabilitation. The Social Rehabilitation Model is aimed at assisting the diagnosed client with learning the skills necessary to live an independent life style. This includes medication management, independent living skills, socialization and vocational and a variety of other support systems. Research suggests that a recently diagnosed schizophrenic can best be treated and success achieved if allowed to participate in an environment in which counseling support and vocational services are offered on a 24-hour basis. It has been found to be most effective for schizophrenics not to be hospitalized for too long but rather to move into a residential setting such as mentioned above. After this, we find moving into less and less restricted programs to be effective, whereby the diagnosed person eventually gets their own apartment or living arrangements and perhaps attends an outpatient program to assist with continued living skills. Take heart. Many new and profound advances have been made in the past few decades in the treatment of schizophrenia. New psychotropic medications are available, and they are more effective and have fewer side effects than previously available medications. Once an untreatable illness, schizophrenia has become a manageable disease for many people, who go on to live normal and independent lives. **If your family member is out of control or suicidal (danger of harm to self or others), stay calm and call 911. Do not try to handle it alone.**

