

What Treatments are available?

If you go to your GP with symptoms of schizophrenia, you should have your mental health needs identified and assessed. You should be offered effective treatments, including referral to specialist services for further assessment, treatment and care if you require it.

Medication

Major tranquillisers – also known as neuroleptics or antipsychotics – might be prescribed to lessen your positive symptoms.

All major tranquillisers have a sedative effect, which might make it more difficult to cope with distressing symptoms. They can also make it difficult for users to use talking treatments. Side effects can also include trembling hands, stiffening of muscles, blurred vision or dizziness.

The newer 'atypical' antipsychotics include clozapine, risperidone, olanzapine, quetiapine, amisulpiride and zotepine. These all seem to have fewer side effects, as well as some effect on negative symptoms. Other antipsychotics that have been widely used for the last 30 years include chlorpromazine (brand name Largactil) and haloperidol (Serenace, Haldol).

There is now significant evidence that maintenance on low doses is more effective in dealing with symptoms, as well as lessening side effects. If you are taking these drugs, you should have the dosage reviewed regularly to keep it as low as possible.

Hospital admission

If you are feeling particularly distressed, you may want to go somewhere that feels safe and undemanding. At present, this usually means going into hospital. Before leaving hospital you should have your needs assessed to enable you to live independently. If you are unwilling to go into hospital, you might be compulsorily admitted under the Mental Health Act 1983.

Community care

Everyone referred to psychiatric services should have their needs assessed and care planned within the Care Programme Approach (CPA). This should provide you with a thorough assessment of your social and health care needs, a care plan, care coordinator and ongoing reviews. You are entitled to say what your needs are, and have the right to have an advocate present

Community mental health teams

Often, care assessments are made by the community mental health teams. The team's aim is to enable you to live independently.

Crisis services

In some areas, crisis services have been developed as alternatives to hospital. Some of these offer crisis accommodation, others aim to support people in their own homes. These services rely less on drug treatments and offer more in the way of talking treatments and informal support.



**For better
mental health**

Understanding Schizophrenia

What is schizophrenia?

The diagnosis schizophrenia is widely used in the mental health system and treatment is based on it. A psychiatrist may make this diagnosis on the grounds of various 'positive' and 'negative' symptoms.

'Positive' symptoms include:

- thought disruption
- auditory hallucinations (hearing voices)
- delusions or other hallucinations.

Thought disruption

A person is said to be experiencing thought disruption if he or she seems unable to follow a logical sequence of thought – if their ideas appear jumbled and make little sense to others.

Auditory hallucinations

Some people hear voices that others around don't hear. The voices may be familiar, friendly or critical. They might discuss the hearer's thoughts or behaviour, or they might tell them what to do. Hearing voices does not inevitably mean a label of schizophrenia. Indeed some research has shown that four per cent of the population hears voices. It appears that, for the majority, these voices are not a problem.

Those diagnosed with schizophrenia seem to hear predominantly negative voices, however. They may have heard voices all their lives, but a stressful life event might make the voices more negative and harder to deal with.

Delusions or other hallucinations

These are defined as beliefs or experiences that are not shared by others. Someone might believe, for instance, that they are being pursued by secret agents or controlled by external forces that are putting thoughts into their mind.

These positive symptoms mean schizophrenia is known as a 'psychosis' and it is treated with major tranquillisers.

The negative symptoms of schizophrenia may include:

- feeling apathetic or emotionally flat
- being unable to concentrate
- wanting to avoid people
- feeling a need to be protected.

It's difficult to say which may be symptoms of schizophrenia, and which are simply reactions to the way people with mental health problems are treated by society.

About us

Dorset Mind is a local, independent charity providing services for people with mental health problems. It is affiliated to Mind, the mental health charity.

The services provided include a befriending service; a group for people suffering from anxiety disorders; groups for women; a sports club and an arts group.

Contact Us

Dorset Mind
11 Shelley Road
Bournemouth
BH1 4JQ

tel: (01202) 392910

email: contact@bpd-mind.fsnet.co.uk

website: www.bpd-mind.fsnet.co.uk

Useful Numbers

Samaritans	01202 551999
Bournemouth Mental Health Helpline	01202 314577 (Evenings only)
Mind Information Line	0845 766 0163
Saneline	0845 767 8000
Rethink Advice Service	020 8974 6814