



Schizophrenia

UniCare Health Plan of West Virginia Inc. (UniCare) has a care management program for schizophrenia. This program will help you better understand and manage your schizophrenia. We can assist you to set health goals and create a care plan that fits your lifestyle. You do not have to join the program. You are enrolled as a member of UniCare.

Living with schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is a disorder of the brain. When a person has schizophrenia, it gets in the way of daily life. We want you to know you can take control.

If you like, we will keep your provider informed of your condition and the services we provide you. Your case manager can help you learn how to better manage your schizophrenia.

Things to know:

- Providers do not know the causes of schizophrenia
- The first signs of the disorder 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 medication and some type of life skills or psychosocial therapy. This may help you in:

- Being able to work
- Doing everyday things
- Getting along better with family and friends

Medications can greatly improve the lives of many people with the disorder. They can help decrease the symptoms of schizophrenia so that you:

- Know what is real and not real
- Are able to take better care of yourself
- Get along better with family and friends

Psychosocial treatments are another way of treating schizophrenia. You should first be stable on your medications 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, money management and how to talk to people such as employers.
- **Family education** - Family is often very involved in supporting a relative who has schizophrenia. It is very important 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 medications properly.
- **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 medications.

How to take your schizophrenia medications:

- If you are taking schizophrenia medications, do not drive until you know how your medication is going to 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 medications. Talk to your provider before taking new medications. These include ones that don't need a prescription.
- Talk to your provider about any concerns you have about your medications. Your doctor can help find a medication that has the fewest side effects and will work for you.
- Your medication only works if taken daily as ordered by a provider. It is very important to take your medication even when you are feeling better. Always follow your provider's advice about how much medication to take and how often to take it.
- Talk with your provider before stopping any medications.
- We can help you know how to take your medications the right way.
- We can help you understand how your medications work.

Things you can do to help with your treatment:

- Keep your appointments with your provider 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 neighborhood programs and resources
- Tips to talk with your provider 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 with you to your visit.
2. Follow your provider's advice - if you have questions or concerns, let your provider know.
3. Make sure your provider knows what medicines you are taking.

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/health/topics/schizophrenia/index.shtml) 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
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/schizophrenia/index.shtml>, accessed November 8, 2013.

* National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
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<http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=schizophrenia9>, accessed November 8, 2013.

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National Institute of Mental Health U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • National Institutes of Health
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/schizophrenia/index.shtml>

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



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