



Patient education: Schizophrenia – Discharge instructions

(The Basics)

Written by the doctors and editors at UpToDate

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What are discharge instructions?

Discharge instructions are information about how to take care of yourself after getting medical care for a health problem.

What is schizophrenia?

Schizophrenia is a brain disorder that keeps you from thinking clearly. It can cause you to see or hear things that aren't there, or to believe things that aren't true.

Get help right away if you are thinking of hurting or killing yourself!

Sometimes, people with schizophrenia think of hurting or killing themselves. If you ever feel like you might hurt yourself or someone else, help is available:

- In the US, contact the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:
 - To speak to someone, call or text **988**.
 - To talk to someone online, go to www.988lifeline.org/chat.
- Call your doctor or nurse, and tell them it is an emergency.
- Call for an ambulance (in the US and Canada, call 9-1-1).
- Go to the emergency department at the nearest hospital.

How do I care for myself at home?

Ask the doctor or nurse what you should do when you go home. Make sure that you understand exactly what you need to do to care for yourself. Ask questions if there is anything you do not understand.

You should also:

- Take your medicines exactly as your doctor tells you, so you get the correct amount of each medicine.
 - Some people find it helpful to use reminders or a weekly pill box.
 - If you are having side effects, talk to your doctor. Many side effects go away after a few days or weeks of use.
- Go to all of your appointments. This might include counseling sessions, support groups, or appointments for medical treatments.
- Work with a counselor to learn skills to help you live with your illness. This is an important part of your care and treatment. Your doctor might also suggest that your family take part in counseling with you.
- Take care of yourself.
 - Avoid alcohol and recreational drugs.
 - Try to get regular physical activity or exercise. Even gentle forms of activity, like walking, are good for your health.
 - Find healthy ways to handle stress, like talking to others or hobbies you enjoy. Relaxation exercises, meditation, and activities like yoga or tai chi can help you handle stress.
 - Try to get at least 8 hours of sleep every night.
- Speak with trusted family or friends about your illness and how they can help.
- Talk to your doctor about how to make where you live a safe place. You might need to consider removing knives and other items that could hurt you or someone else.

What follow-up care do I need?

Schizophrenia needs to be watched closely. Your doctor or nurse will tell you when to make a follow-up appointment to check on your progress. Go to these appointments.

When should I call the doctor?

Call for emergency help right away (in the US and Canada, call 9-1-1) if you have thoughts of hurting yourself or someone else.

Call for advice if:

- Your symptoms do not get better within 1 to 2 weeks.
 - Your body is having trouble staying still or is moving in ways you cannot control.
 - You have changes in your mood or behavior.
 - You see or hear things that are not there.
 - You are having trouble taking your medicine.
 - You are not able to take care of yourself.
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More on this topic

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This topic retrieved from UpToDate on: Oct 06, 2023.

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Topic 142306 Version 1.0

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