

SCHIZOPHRENIA GLOSSARY

This section provides definitions for some of the medial terms used in this guide, as well as other words that you may encounter in connection with schizophrenia.

Active phase of schizophrenia – short, intense episodes of the illness in which most of its severe symptoms are manifest.

Agranulocytosis – failure of the bone marrow to produce neutrophil white blood cells that fight infection; agranulocytosis is a possible adverse effect of clozapine.

Ambivalence – simultaneously experiencing opposing or conflicting emotions, attitudes, ideas or wishes toward a person or situation.

Anhedonia – an inability to experience pleasure.

Antipsychotic medication - medications used in the treatment of schizophrenia. Formerly known as major tranquilizers.

Anxiolytics - medications used to reduce severe anxiety, tension and agitation. Previously known as minor tranquilizers.

Autism – a state of mind characterized by daydreaming, fantasies and disregard for external reality.

Blocking- when a person's train of thought suddenly stops, even in the middle of a sentence.

Flat or blunt affect – exhibiting little emotion and having an expressionless face.

Incongruous affect – an inappropriate display of emotions, for instance, laughing when talking about sad events.

Negativism – an attitude characterized by ignoring, resisting or opposing suggestions from other people.

Neuroleptics – medications used in the treatment of schizophrenia that have antipsychotic effects. Formerly known as major tranquilizers.

Parkinsonism – a side-effect of neuroleptics characterized by awkward and stiff facial and arm movements.

Prodromal phase of schizophrenia – the period of time leading up to an active phase of schizophrenia. It can vary in length depending on the individual.

Reality testing – ability to distinguish reality from unreality. Poor reality testing is the inability to determine where fantasy ends and reality begins.

Residual phase of schizophrenia – the long period of time following the active phase of illness in which symptoms are much less severe or almost disappear.

Schizo-affective disorder – concurrent symptoms of both schizophrenia and affective disorder. Affective disorders are characterized by disturbances of mood such as depression and elation. The two main categories are depressive and manic-depressive illness/bipolar affective disorder.

Schizoid – abnormally shy, aloof, sensitive and withdrawn, to the point that normal functioning is impaired.

Tardive dyskinesia – a possible side-effect of antipsychotic medication, usually after prolonged use. It usually consists of involuntary movements of the tongue, face, eyes, mouth or jaw, of which the person may not be aware. If tardive dyskinesia appears, the neuroleptics may need to be changed or discontinued.

Thought disorder – when the continuity of thought is broken so that the person is not able to carry through a line of thinking in a way that makes sense to other people.