

Quality Standards

Patient Reference Guide



Schizophrenia

Care in the Community for Adults

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DRAFT

**Health Quality
Ontario**

Let's make our health system healthier

Quality standards outline what high-quality care looks like. They focus on conditions where there are large variations in how care is delivered, or where there are gaps between the care provided in Ontario and the care patients should receive.

This guide addresses variations and gaps in care in Ontario that need attention when it comes to care in the community for people with schizophrenia. It is based on the best available evidence and was created in partnership with people with schizophrenia, their families, and health care professionals.

This guide is for people with schizophrenia, their families, and their caregivers to help you know what to ask for when receiving care in the community and to ensure you receive the highest-quality care.

Living with schizophrenia can be difficult, but many people can and do recover, and are able to lead full and enriching lives. You and your family don't have to do it alone. The people on your health care team want to build a relationship of trust with you and your family so they can help you live the best life you can. The more they know about you and your goals, the better they can help create a plan for treatment and recovery that meets your needs.

If you or someone you care about has schizophrenia and is receiving care in the community...

You can use this guide to work with your care team to develop a care plan that works for you, to ask informed questions about schizophrenia care, and to learn more about how you and your family can get the supports you need.

Care plans can be very different for each person, so it is important to work closely with your health care team.

Here are some things to consider.

Planning Your Care

- Your health care team should work with you to develop a care plan that works for you. Your family or caregivers can be involved in making the plan, if you agree. A care plan is a written document that you agree to. It describes your goals, the care and services you will receive, and who will provide them. The care plan should be updated regularly.
- Your care plan should be informed by a comprehensive assessment. This assessment should include questions about your physical and mental health, your medical history, what medications you are taking, your social situation, your goals for recovery, and how you are feeling.
- Following the assessment and as part of your regular checkups, your care team will look for health problems that are common in people with schizophrenia, such as diabetes, weight gain, or heart or lung disease. The results of these checkups should be part of your care plan.

Understanding Schizophrenia

- When you understand schizophrenia better, you can be more actively involved in your own recovery. Your care team should give you information to help you manage your schizophrenia and understand this condition.
- Your care team should also give your family or caregiver opportunities to learn about schizophrenia, and to get support if they need it. This is important so they can do a better job of helping you and supporting you in your recovery, while also looking after their own needs.

Treatment

- Your health care professional should offer both antipsychotic medication and psychological therapy as needed to treat your symptoms.
- Depending on your needs, your care team may connect you with specialized treatment services:
 - Early psychosis intervention program if you are experiencing psychosis for the first time. Psychosis is a treatable condition that affects your mind and can result in trouble deciding what's real and what's not
 - Assertive community treatment, where a team works directly with you to provide support and assistance in areas such as housing, medication, employment, relationships, and life skills to meet your needs and goals
 - Intensive case management, where a case manager connects you with services and supports in areas such as housing, medication, employment, relationships, and life skills to meet your needs and goalsThese services will help you to live in the community, manage your symptoms, and reach your recovery goals.

Antipsychotic Medication

- You should be offered only one antipsychotic medication at a time. If your symptoms don't get better or you experience significant side effects after taking a medication regularly for 2 weeks at the right dose, you should talk to your health care professional about switching to a different medication.
- You may want to take your antipsychotic medication as a long-acting injection so you don't have to remember to take a pill every day. Your health care professional should talk to you about whether this would be a good option for you. Depending on the medication, you would get an injection every 2 weeks to every

3 months. Not all antipsychotic medications can be given as a long-acting injection.

- If you have tried at least two different types of antipsychotic medications and you experience significant side effects, or your symptoms are not better, your health care professional should talk to you about taking another type of antipsychotic medication called clozapine.
- If an antipsychotic medication works to make your symptoms better, you will need to keep taking it throughout your life to stay well. You should review your medications once a year with your health care professional to make sure the medication continues to work for you.

Psychological Therapy

- You should be offered psychological therapy as part of your treatment, based on your needs. Two types are called “cognitive behavioural therapy” and “cognitive remediation therapy.” Cognitive behavioural therapy helps you focus on everyday problems and learn how your thoughts can affect your feelings. Cognitive remediation therapy helps you improve your memory, concentration, and problem-solving skills.

Living Well With Schizophrenia

- Alcohol and drugs may make your schizophrenia symptoms worse and make your treatment less effective. Your health care professional should ask you about whether you use alcohol and drugs and offer you treatment to help you stop using them, if needed.
- Quitting or cutting down on smoking can help improve your physical and mental health. Your health care professional should talk with you about ways to stop smoking or smoke less.
- A healthy lifestyle can help improve your physical and mental health. Your care team should give you information about programs that help you exercise and eat healthy foods.
- It’s easier to focus on your recovery when you don’t have to worry about having somewhere to live. Your care team should connect you with services that can help you find a safe, affordable, stable place to live, as well as housing supports, if you need them.
- Your health care team should ask you about your work and education goals, and help you find ways to meet those goals.

Draft—do not cite. Report is a work in progress and could change following public consultation.

Living with schizophrenia can be difficult, but recovery is possible. Many people with schizophrenia lead full and enriching lives. Your care team will work with you and your family to help you reach this goal.

Everybody is different, and some statements may not apply in your situation. If you have questions about your care, **it is important to speak with your health care professional.**

Looking for more information?

Please contact us at qualitystandards@hqontario.ca if you have any questions or feedback about this patient reference guide.

A more detailed version of this quality standard, written for health care professionals, is available on our website. You can find it at www.hqontario.ca.

About Health Quality Ontario

Health Quality Ontario is the provincial advisor on the quality of health care. We are motivated by a single-minded purpose: **Better health for all Ontarians.**

Our quality standards are concise sets of statements outlining what quality care looks like for conditions where there are large variations in how care is delivered, or where there are gaps between the care provided in Ontario and the care patients should receive. They are based on the best available evidence and are developed in collaboration with clinical experts from across the province, and patients and caregivers with lived experience with the condition being discussed.

For more information about Health Quality Ontario and our quality standards, visit:
www.hqontario.ca.

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