



**Gateway to Hope**  
Training Program of HHCI

# Schizophrenia

# What is Schizophrenia?

- Schizophrenia is a chronic and severe mental disorder that affects how a person thinks, feels, and behaves
- People with schizophrenia may seem like they have lost touch with reality and can be very disabling

# Know the Symptoms

- **Positive symptoms** are psychotic behaviors where a person may “lose touch” with some aspects of reality
  - Symptoms include:
    - Hallucinations
    - Delusions
    - Unusual or dysfunctional ways of thinking
    - Agitated body movements

# Know the Symptoms

- **Negative symptoms** are associated with disruptions to normal emotions and behaviors
  - Symptoms include:
    - Reduced expression of emotions with facial expressions or voice tone
    - Reduced feelings of pleasure in everyday life
    - Difficulty beginning and sustaining activities
    - Reduced speaking

# Know the Symptoms

- **Cognitive symptoms** of schizophrenia can be subtle
  - When they are more severe, patients may notice changes in their memory or thinking
  - Symptoms include:
    - Poor “executive functioning” (the ability to understand information and use it to make decisions)
    - Trouble focusing or paying attention
    - Problems with “working memory” (the ability to use information immediately after learning it)

# Risk Factors

- **Brain chemistry and structure:**
  - Problems during brain development before birth may lead to faulty connections
  - Imbalances in the chemical reactions of dopamine and glutamate in the brain plays a role in triggering psychotic symptoms due to genetics or brain differences

# Risk Factors

- **Genes and environment:**
  - Interactions between genes and environmental factors are necessary for schizophrenia to develop
  - Environmental factors may involve:
    - Exposure to viruses
    - Malnutrition before birth
    - Problems during birth
    - Psychosocial factors

# Treatments and Therapies

- **Antipsychotic medications**
  - Prescribed by doctors who work together with the patient to find the best medication strategy
- **Psychosocial treatments**
  - Help persons to learn and utilize coping skills to address the everyday challenges of schizophrenia while pursuing their life goals