

To Learn More

Books:

Surviving Schizophrenia, by Fuller E. Torrey, 1995

The Quiet Room, by Lori Schiller and Amanda Bennett, 1994

Nothing to Be Ashamed Of: Growing Up with Mental Illness in the Family, by Sherry H. Dinner, 1989

The Family Face of Schizophrenia, by Patricia Backlar, 1994

Learning About Schizophrenia: Rays of Hope, by the Schizophrenia Society of Canada

Websites:

<http://www.schizophrenia.ca/>

<http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=schizophrenia9>

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0001925/>

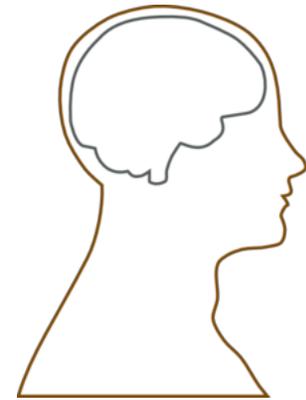
Help for schizophrenia in the Montreal area

- *Montreal Children's Hospital
Psychiatry Department:*
514-412-4449
- *Kids Help Phone:* **1-800-668-6868**
- *Herzl Family Practice Centre
Adolescent Hotline:* **514-340-8242**
- *Head & Hands:* **514-481-0277**
- *PEPP-Montreal (Douglas
Hospital):* **514-888-4453**

AMI-Quebec has many programs to help families and people suffering from mental illness. If you recognize yourself or someone you care about in this pamphlet, please contact us and we will direct you to an appropriate resource.

514-486-1448
www.amiquebec.org
outreach@amiquebec.org

SCHIZOPHRENIA



AMI-Quebec Action on Mental Illness

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Max was sitting on the bus coming home from school when, out of nowhere, he heard a voice telling him to get off the bus. Off the bus? He wasn't even halfway home yet. He dismissed the command, thinking maybe he'd overheard someone else's conversation. Later that night, watching TV, he heard someone tell him he'd been chosen. Chosen for what? Who was talking to him? Be patient, the voice said, and I will explain everything...

Max's friends were wondering what was wrong with him. In class, during lunch, or on the bus, he would sit staring into space. When he did talk it was in rambling and disconnected sentences that made no sense. Sometimes it even seemed like he was talking to himself. After a while he took to staring at them and watching every move that they made. It was as if he was paranoid or something. His hair was long and scraggly and he didn't seem to care about how he looked anymore. His friends started leaving him alone - maybe he was into drugs and not telling them. Maybe it was a phase.

Max was not going through a phase. Max was experiencing the early symptoms of schizophrenia, a disorder of the brain that affects thinking, feeling and behaviour. Schizophrenia is **not** a multiple or "split" personality. Schizophrenia usually strikes

young people in their late teens or early twenties. For some people the illness advances so gradually that they and their family are not aware for a long time that they are ill. In some cases, schizophrenia strikes quickly and without warning. Listed below are some **early warning signs** that friends and family might see in a person who is becoming ill:

- ⇒ Inability to sleep, unusual waking hours
- ⇒ Social withdrawal, isolation, indifference
- ⇒ Deterioration in social relationships
- ⇒ Inability to concentrate, make decisions
- ⇒ Hostility, suspicion, fearfulness
- ⇒ Deterioration in personal hygiene
- ⇒ Flat, expressionless gaze, staring
- ⇒ Peculiar use of words or language structure
- ⇒ Frequent hitch-hiking or walking for no reason

If these behaviours persist over a few weeks and represent an obvious change from previous behaviours, then seek medical help.

➤ **Symptoms**

- Hallucinations – hearing and seeing things that do not exist
- Delusions – believing in events that are not really happening
- Paranoia – fear of being watched, followed, or spied on
- Disordered thoughts – jumbled thinking, disorganized or fragmented speech
- Emotional withdrawal – losing interest in usual activities and personal relationships
- Lack of communication – avoiding eye contact, losing of conversational ability
- Passivity – lacking energy and drive

➤ **Treatment**

Medication, along with psychosocial intervention, is used to control the symptoms of schizophrenia. Education is extremely important in learning how to cope and live with the illness. Regular appointments with a psychiatrist and medication compliance are usually advised. It is important to build a strong support network that will provide recovery strategies and encouragement.