

Schizoaffective Disorder



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Those with schizoaffective disorder may see or hear things that are not there, experience extreme mood changes such as high mood periods (mania) and low mood periods (depression). It may take longer to diagnose schizoaffective disorder as the signs are often confused with other mental illnesses, such as bipolar disorder, depression, or schizophrenia. Men and women both experience schizoaffective disorder, but men often develop the illness when they are younger.

What are the symptoms?

Just like with any mental illness, people with schizoaffective disorder can experience signs of Schizoaffective Disorder differently. Some signs of Schizoaffective Disorder are:

- Seeing things that are not there
- Hearing things that are not there
- Difficulty organizing thoughts
- Periods of extremely low mood and energy
- Periods of extremely high mood and energy.

What are the causes?

The exact cause of schizoaffective disorder is unknown. A combination of causes may contribute to its development. Some of these causes are:

- **Family History.** Schizoaffective disorder tends to run in families.
- **Brain chemistry and structure.**
- **Stress.** Such as a death in the family, problems with a partner, money problems, or losing a job are some examples of stress that can cause schizoaffective disorder.
- **Drug use.** Some studies have linked drugs such as LSD with schizoaffective disorder.

Diagnosis

Schizoaffective disorder can be difficult to diagnose because it has symptoms of many other mental illnesses. To be diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder a person must have the following symptoms:

- Hearing or seeing things that are not there for at least 2 weeks without an episode of low mood periods (depression) or high mood periods (mania).
- A major depressive episode.
- Depression or mania must present for most of the time of the illness.
- Difficulties with day to day life and functioning.
- Difficulties in social settings.
- Symptoms that cannot be explained by drug use or another medical condition.

Treatment

How well treatment works depends on the type of schizoaffective disorder, how serious the symptoms are, and how long they have been going on for. People with schizoaffective disorder are often treated with a combination of:

- **Medication**, such as antipsychotics, antidepressants, or mood stabilizers
- **Psychotherapy**
- **Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)**, which helps change the negative thinking and behavior associated with feelings of depression.

- **Electroconvulsive Treatment (ECT).** ECT involves transmitting short electrical impulses into the brain.

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