

QUALITY STANDARDS

# Schizophrenia

A guide for adults  
with schizophrenia  
who are in hospital

2023 UPDATE

Ontario Health is committed to improving the quality of health care in the province in partnership with patients, health care professionals, and other organizations.

To do that, Ontario Health develops quality standards. These are documents that outline what high-quality care looks like for conditions or processes where there are large differences in how care is delivered, or where there are gaps between the care provided in Ontario and the care patients should receive. These quality standards set out important steps to improve care. They are based on current evidence and input from an expert committee that includes patients, caregivers, health care professionals, and researchers.

This patient guide accompanies the quality standard on [schizophrenia care for adults in hospitals](#). It outlines the top 11 areas where providers can take steps to improve care for adults with schizophrenia who are in hospital. The patient guide also includes suggestions on what to discuss with your health care providers, as well as links to helpful resources.

This guide was originally developed in 2016, and was revised in 2023 to reflect updates to the [Schizophrenia: Care for Adults in Hospitals](#) quality standard.

To learn more about high-quality care in the community for people with schizophrenia, please see Ontario Health's [Schizophrenia: Care in the Community for Adults](#) quality standard and patient guide.

If you are a family member or caregiver, this guide was created with you in mind, too, to give you the information you need to ask informed questions of your family member's health care professionals.

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

Schizophrenia is a chronic mental health condition that usually begins in late adolescence or early adulthood. There is no cure for schizophrenia, but many people can “recover.” “Recovery” is a term commonly used by the mental health community. It means you are able to live a satisfying and hopeful life, even when you may be experiencing ongoing symptoms of your illness.

You and your family don’t have to do this alone. Your health care professional will want to help you live the best life you can, and to build a relationship of trust with you and your family. 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 hospital...**

You can use this guide to work with your health care professional to develop a care plan that works for you, including access to culturally appropriate care. We encourage you to use this guide to ask informed questions about schizophrenia care, and to learn more about how you and your family can get the supports you need.

# Top 11 areas to improve care in hospital for people with schizophrenia



## Quality Statement 1: Comprehensive Interprofessional Assessment

### What the standard says

Adults who are admitted to an inpatient setting with a primary diagnosis of schizophrenia undergo a comprehensive interprofessional assessment that informs their care plan.

### What this means for you

You should receive a full assessment every time you are admitted to hospital. An assessment means that your care team will want to learn more about you to understand how best to help you. It should include questions about your medical history, what medications you are taking, your social situation, and your goals for recovery.

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



## Quality Statement 2: Screening for Substance Use

### What the standard says

Adults who present to an emergency department or in an inpatient setting with a primary diagnosis of schizophrenia are assessed for substance use and, if appropriate, offered treatment for concurrent disorders.

### What this means for you

When you are in hospital, you should be assessed for the use of alcohol or drugs, because they might make your symptoms worse and interfere with treatment.

To learn more about treatment for opioid use disorder and alcohol use disorder, please see Ontario Health's [Opioid Use Disorder](#) and [Problematic Alcohol Use and Alcohol Use Disorder](#) quality standards.



## Quality Statement 3: Physical Health Assessment

### What the standard says

Adults who are admitted to an inpatient setting with a primary diagnosis of schizophrenia undergo a physical health assessment focusing on conditions common in people with schizophrenia. This assessment informs their care plan.

### What this means for you

You should have a physical examination every time you are admitted to hospital. It should focus on conditions that are common in schizophrenia (for example, heart disease and diabetes) and it should be used to develop your care plan.



## Quality Statement 4: Promoting Physical Activity and Healthy Eating

### What the standard says

Adults who are admitted to an inpatient setting with a primary diagnosis of schizophrenia are offered interventions that promote both physical activity and healthy eating.

### What this means for you

You should be offered services or programs that encourage you to exercise and eat in a healthy way. These steps can help improve your physical and mental health.



## Quality Statement 5: Promoting Smoking Cessation

### What the standard says

Adults who are admitted to an inpatient setting with a primary diagnosis of schizophrenia are offered behavioural and pharmacological interventions to alleviate nicotine-withdrawal symptoms and to help them reduce or stop smoking tobacco.

### What this means for you

You should be offered services or programs that may help you to stop smoking or smoke less. Quitting or cutting down on smoking can help improve your physical and mental health.



## Quality Statement 6: Treatment With Clozapine

### What the standard says

Adults who are admitted to an inpatient setting with a primary diagnosis of schizophrenia, and whose symptoms have not responded to previous adequate trials of treatment with two antipsychotic medications, are offered clozapine.

### What this means for you

If you have tried at least two different antipsychotic medications and your symptoms continue to cause you distress, you should be offered clozapine. Clozapine is taken by mouth.



## Quality Statement 7: Treatment With Long-Acting Injectable Antipsychotic Medication

### What the standard says

Adults who are admitted to an inpatient setting with a primary diagnosis of schizophrenia are offered the option of a long-acting injectable antipsychotic medication.

### What this means for you

You may want to take your antipsychotic medication as a long-acting injection so you don't have to remember to take it every day. Your health care professional should talk with you early in your treatment 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.



## Quality Statement 8: Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Psychosis

### What the standard says

Adults who are admitted to an inpatient setting with a primary diagnosis of schizophrenia are offered individual cognitive behavioural therapy for psychosis, either in the inpatient setting or as part of a post-discharge care plan.

### What this means for you

You should be offered cognitive behavioural therapy. This type of psychotherapy helps you develop skills and strategies to get healthy and stay healthy by focusing on the problems of day-to-day life and how your perceptions can affect your feelings.



## Quality Statement 9: Family Intervention

### What the standard says

Adults who are admitted to an inpatient setting with a primary diagnosis of schizophrenia are offered family intervention.

### What this means for you

Interventions should be offered to your family, caregivers, and personal supports to help them understand schizophrenia and its signs and symptoms. This will allow them to better support you, help you cope, and help to prevent relapse.



## Quality Statement 10: Follow-Up Appointment After Discharge

### What the standard says

Adults with a primary diagnosis of schizophrenia who are discharged from an inpatient setting have a follow-up appointment within 7 days.

### What this means for you

Before you leave the hospital, you should have a follow-up appointment scheduled with a health care provider in the community.



## Quality Statement 11: Transitions in Care

### What the standard says

Adults with a primary diagnosis of schizophrenia who are discharged from an inpatient setting have a team or provider who is accountable for communication and the coordination and delivery of a care plan that is tailored to their needs.

### What this means for you

When you are preparing to leave hospital, your health care professionals at the hospital should work with you to make sure that all important information is transferred to your health care providers in the community and that you are connected to the ongoing supports that you need.

To learn more about high-quality care for people leaving the hospital, please see Ontario Health's [Transitions Between Hospital and Home](#) quality standard.

# Suggestions on what to discuss with your clinicians

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## Ask your clinicians:

- Who will be involved in my care and what are their roles?
- What could my treatment include? (Consider discussing things like antipsychotic medication and nondrug interventions)
- What benefits and side effects should I expect from my medication? How will we manage side effects if they happen?
- How can I live well with schizophrenia? (Consider discussing healthy eating and exercise, smoking and substance use, family involvement, and housing and employment)
- Do I need to follow up with my family doctor or other health care providers once I leave hospital? Can this appointment be booked for me?
- When and who should I call if my symptoms get worse after I leave hospital?
- Where can I get more information and support?

## Share with your clinicians:

- Any concerns or questions you have about your condition, care plan, and hospital admission
- Who you want to include in decisions about your care (like a family member or caregiver, if you agree)
- If you do not understand why you are taking a medication
- Difficulties you may be having taking your medication (for example, some people cannot afford medication and other people may experience side effects that cause them to stop taking medication)
- If you are worried about going home for safety or other reasons
- Whether you are in need of basic items—such as food or heat—for your health and well-being
- Any other questions or concerns you have

# Learn more

- Early Psychosis Intervention Ontario Network (EPION) [help4psychosis.ca](http://help4psychosis.ca)
  - This website provides a list of Ontario-based early psychosis intervention programs for people living with psychosis. It also provides education and support to families.
- [Institute for Advances in Mental Health \(IAM\) One-to-One Support](#) or call 1-855-449-9949
  - At IAM, a support line is available via telephone or email for people living chronic mental illness, including schizophrenia and psychosis, and their families. The support line can assist with a wide array of items, including housing, employment, crisis planning, addiction and substance use, and navigating and connecting with resources in the community. Education and workshops for families are also available on the website
- Schizophrenia Society of Canada [schizophrenia.ca/education/](http://schizophrenia.ca/education/)
  - The “Education” section of this website provides reliable Canadian-based information, tools, and support for individuals living with mental illness and their families.
- [Schizophrenia: An Information Guide by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health](#)
  - This guide is for people with schizophrenia, their families, and anyone else interested in better understanding this condition and what it is like to experience it. This guide aims to answer questions people may have about schizophrenia and can also help people know what questions to ask their health care provider.
- ConnexOntario [connexontario.ca](http://connexontario.ca) or call 1-866-531-2600
  - ConnexOntario provides 24/7 service information via telephone, text messaging, online chat, or email. It aims to link services and supports in the community to people with mental health and addictions conditions, including schizophrenia, and their families.

# Need more information?

If you have any questions or feedback about this guide, please contact us at [QualityStandards@OntarioHealth.ca](mailto:QualityStandards@OntarioHealth.ca) or 1-877-280-8538 (TTY: 1-800-855-0511).

Need this information in an accessible format? 1-877-280-8538, TTY 1-800-855-0511, [info@ontariohealth.ca](mailto:info@ontariohealth.ca)

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