

Who can I contact for help?

Substance Abuse Service Helpline

 (844) 804-7500

Alcoholics Anonymous

 www.aa.org

National Council on Alcoholism & Drug Dependence

 (800) 622-2255

Families Anonymous

 (800) 736-9805

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

 (800) 273-8255

Alcoholics Anonymous—Online Chat Meetings

 aa-intergroup.org/directory_chat.php

Co-occurring Alcohol Use Disorder and Schizophrenia



What is schizophrenia?

Schizophrenia is a severe mental health disorder that interferes with people's thoughts, emotions, and perceptions. They may see things that are not there, hear voices when nobody is around, or believe things that are not true. Some people with schizophrenia have a hard time with personal relationships, and some may find it hard to keep a steady job or live independently.

What are symptoms of Schizophrenia?

Symptoms of schizophrenia include the following:

- Delusions (believing things that are not true)
- Hallucinations (hearing, seeing, or feeling things that are not actually there)
- Speaking or thinking in disorganized ways
- Feeling scared about one's safety or believing one is being targeted by others
- Having intrusive and repetitive thoughts
- Moving or talking very little
- Not showing much emotion
- Not taking showers or keeping clean
- Not being interested in spending time with people or having fun
- Having problems learning and remembering
- Having problems understanding what people are saying
- Having difficulties solving problems
- Having problems making sense of new information

What is a co-occurring alcohol use disorder (COD-alcohol)?

A person with an alcohol use disorder (AUD) may also have a mental illness, such as schizophrenia. This is called **co-occurring alcohol use disorder (COD-alcohol)**.

Alcohol can influence the onset of mental health symptoms and vice versa, although the direct cause for each can be uncertain.

Schizophrenia with AUD

Schizophrenia and alcohol use disorder both affect how the brain works. Areas of the brain thought to affect schizophrenia may contain changes that make someone more likely to drink too much alcohol. Drinking too much can worsen schizophrenia.

Hazards of COD-alcohol and schizophrenia

A person may drink alcohol to block the symptoms of their schizophrenia. But once the effects of alcohol wear off, the symptoms can be worse.

Uncontrolled body movements are often a side effect of schizophrenia medications. Alcohol can make body control worse, increasing the risk for an injury, fall, or accident. Alcohol can interfere with medications taken to control symptoms of schizophrenia.

What can I do if I have AUD and schizophrenia?

- **Ask for help.** The sooner you get treated, the sooner you can reduce the risks associated with a co-occurring disorder.
- Receiving treatment for one or both conditions is entirely up to how ready you feel. Your treatment plan will be decided with a health care professional.
- Treating schizophrenia can have a positive impact on an alcohol use disorder and vice versa. Speaking with health care professionals can help in finding the root source of distress.
- Receiving treatment for one or both conditions means a step forward in living a healthier lifestyle. You will be on the right path to participating in daily tasks that might have been hard to do before.