

## help tip 2

# Positive and negative symptoms associated with schizophrenia

### By positive symptoms we mean:

- Delusions
- Hallucinations
- Thought disorders

These are most intense during an acute episode.

Often accompanied by paranoia, leading to the development of irrational suspicions and distrust of people including family members in particular.

Positive symptoms usually respond to antipsychotic medication.

Unfortunately this is not the case for everyone.

The effects of medication on positive symptoms begin to show after about 2 weeks, reaching optimal level at about 6 weeks.

Medication taken regularly can bring the relapse rate, in terms of return to hospital, down to about 60% within 2 years.

Important to realise that **medication does not cure** these symptoms and if medication is stopped the positive symptoms will return

### It is mostly the positive symptoms which respond to medications



### By negative symptoms we mean:

- Decreased motivation
- Social withdrawal
- Inability or difficulty in making friends
- Slowness of movement
- Vulnerability to stress
- Inability to learn from past mistakes
- Inability to enjoy life

Most of the medications commonly used do not treat the negative symptoms. That is the situation no matter how often the person goes back into hospital.

This makes life very difficult for relatives because these are the symptoms, which are long lasting and appear in about half the people who have an initial acute episode.

Chronic schizophrenia is where positive and or negative symptoms persist despite medication. For some people with schizophrenia, insight (understanding and acceptance of the illness) fluctuates.

There are some new drugs, such as:

- Clozapine
- Olanzapine
- Risperidone
- Quetiapine
- Amisulpride
- Aripiprizole

which are being used that are quite effective in some of these chronic conditions.

