

THE CAUSES & COURSE OF SCHIZOPHRENIA

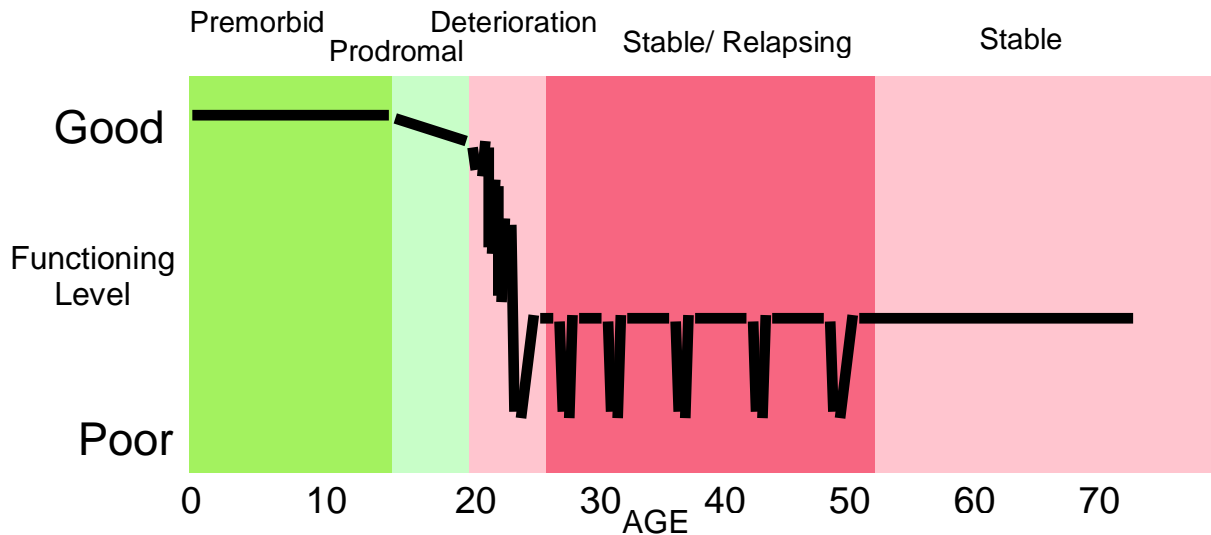
The Causes of Schizophrenia...

While the exact mechanism is unclear, it is known that the underlying causes of schizophrenia are biological and genetic. The role of stress, drugs and alcohol, and family environment are not causal, but do play an important role in contributing to relapse or recovery.

The clear role of genetics is evidenced in the following:

<u>If this relative has schizophrenia . . .</u>	<u>Your chance of getting schizophrenia is . . .</u>
Identical Twin	46%
Both Parents	48%
Sibling or Parent	12%
Aunt, Nephew, Grandparent	5%
First cousin, great Aunt	2%
No relative	1%

The Natural Course of a Biological Illness (Untreated Schizophrenia)...



- Premorbid – While some may have impairments from infancy, most persons will function at a normal level until the onset of the illness.
- Prodromal – Early signs of the illness include mood fluctuations, impaired school performance, poor peer relationships, behavior problems, odd or unusual ideas. At present, it is virtually impossible to distinguish between being signs of schizophrenia, other problems, or normal adolescence.
- Deterioration – The traumatic time for person and family when the illness hits bringing with it all its problems in dealing with life. This often ends with the first hospitalization.
- Stable/Relapsing – Without treatment, there is no recovery. The person fluctuates between relapse and partial stabilization, unable to attain the stability to pursue meaningful life goals.
- Stability – While the exact mechanism is unclear, the illness does tend to mellow in older adults, as the more disturbing and agitating symptoms decrease.