

MANAGING RELAPSE IN YOUR FAMILY MEMBER

What is a relapse?

- People with schizophrenia have an ‘up and down’ course of the illness. Sometimes they feel well and have no problems while at other times, they can experience a worsening of problems. **The return of problems after being well is called a relapse.**
- Relapse can happen quickly in a few days or more slowly over a few weeks
- Before a relapse, there are initial changes in behavior, mood and thinking which are called ‘*early warning signs*’.

What are the consequences of a relapse?

- Some times a relapse can be severe and the person may need a period of stay in a hospital to control the situation
- After a relapse, it may take weeks- months to become better again
- During the time of a relapse, the risk of suicide is increased; being extra careful at this time is important.
- Prevention of a relapse is very important for your family member and the whole family.

How can we prevent a relapse?

- By recognizing early warning signs
- By having a clear plan in advance of dealing with the problem

What are the ‘early warning signs’ of a relapse?

- Tension, nervousness and restlessness
- Not sleeping well or sleeping too much
- Feeling angry or sad most of the time
- Wanting to be alone most of the time
- Having difficulty in concentration and forgetting things easily
- Unusual experiences- feeling confused and ‘unreal’

- Reducing or stopping medicines
- Change in appetite- either less or more than before

What are the effective ways of responding to early warning signs?

- Contact your Community Health Worker immediately
- Family meeting to discuss the situation- clear roles and responsibilities
- Making sure that the right dose of the medicines is being taken regularly
- Organizing an urgent meeting with your doctor for a review of the situation

What are effective things to do in a relapse?

- Contact your Community Health Worker immediately
- Reduce stress and try to solve problems that may have led to the relapse
- Stop alcohol/ drug abuse
- Continue with the right dose of medicine without fail
- Meet your treating doctor urgently to review the situation