

Psychosis

What is Psychosis?

Psychosis is a medical condition that affects the brain. It can be treated. It refers to a **loss of contact with reality** in which people have trouble distinguishing between what is real and what is not. When this happens for the first time it is called first episode psychosis. The first time someone experiences psychosis it can be frightening, confusing, and distressing. ***Psychosis is treatable. Many people recover from a first episode of psychosis and never experience another psychotic episode.***

Psychosis usually first appears in a person's late teens or early twenties.

Early warning signs of Psychosis may include:

- Seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting things that don't exist
- Strange thoughts or beliefs, that don't make sense to others
- Confused thinking, problems with concentrating, memory
- Social withdrawal, feeling anxious, tense, irritable or depressed.
- Feeling restless, agitated, up all night and sleep all day

Signs and Symptoms of Psychosis

Symptoms can come suddenly or gradually, may vary person to person, and can change over time. Here are common symptoms:

- **Changes in Thinking Patterns.** This may include difficulty following a conversation, concentrating or remembering. Thoughts may become mixed up or may not connect in a way that makes sense. Thoughts may be confusing or racing.
- **Unusual or False Beliefs.** False beliefs are also called **delusions**. This is when a person believes something that no one else believes and no evidence can change their mind. A common one is the belief that someone is watching you or is trying to harm you. Other examples include: believing one is being monitored by cameras, or that one's thoughts are being controlled by someone else.
- **Changes in Perception.** During psychosis, people may hear, see, smell, taste or feel something that is not actually there. These changes in perception are called **hallucinations**. The most common of these is hearing voices or sounds that others don't hear.

- **Problems with Feelings or Mood.** Mood swings are common during a psychotic episode. A person may feel unusually excited, depressed, anxious, or very little emotion. Some people feel numb or feel the wrong thing at the wrong time.

- **Changes in behavior.** During a psychotic episode people behave differently from how they usually do. The behaviours have to do with the other symptoms described above. He or she may **spend more time alone** and not be interested in work, friends, or school. Symptoms may **disrupt sleeping or eating patterns**. Sometimes people experiencing a psychotic episode may get very depressed and have thoughts of hurting themselves. **Suicidal thoughts should always be discussed with a health professional.** In an urgent situation the person needs to be taken to the Emergency department of a hospital.

What Causes Psychosis?

It is important to have a thorough medical assessment and mental health assessment in order to determine cause. There are a number of different types of mental illnesses that include psychosis as a symptom. Some examples are: schizophrenia, bipolar illness, depression with psychotic features, drug-induced psychosis. **DRUG USE, especially marijuana, can trigger a psychotic episode as can the use of cocaine, LSD, crystal meth and alcohol.**

Treatment for Psychosis

After an assessment is complete treatment will be recommended based on the results/diagnosis. Treatment usually consists of medication and psychosocial interventions (case management, group or individual therapy). Treatment may be on outpatient basis or in hospital. Family members can get support through counseling, support groups, and educational groups. *Treatment is more successful when started early.*

Good news. The symptoms of psychosis get better with treatment.

How to help yourself: 1. Learn the warning signs or symptoms, 2. Learn how to manage stress, 3. Build a circle of supportive people around you, 4. Stay involved in activities you enjoy. 5. Avoid drugs.

Do You Need Help?

- ✓ If you are in danger of hurting yourself or someone else contact the Mental Health Crisis Service....519-433-2023
- ✓ Contact your doctor, Healer, a counselor if you have concerns about psychosis.

[BACK TO MENTAL HEALTH AND CRISIS INTERVENTION](#)

