



Symptoms of psychosis

Psychosis is a set of symptoms that affect the mind, which result in a loss of contact with reality. The symptoms of psychosis make it harder or impossible for a person to know what is real, to think clearly, to communicate, relate to others, and to feel emotions.

Psychosis causes changes in thinking, mood, and behavior. The potential symptoms include:

- Disorganized thinking which leads the individual to have difficulty staying on a topic or telling a clear story.
- Delusions - false beliefs that are firmly held despite evidence against them.
- Hallucinations - sensory experiences that occur without any external stimulus. Most often, the hallucinations involve hearing voices or seeing things that are not there.
- Disorganized or abnormal behavior. The behavior often makes it difficult for the person to perform the basic activities of daily living such as hygiene, eating, and dressing.
- A decrease in the ability to express emotions and in motivation to engage in usual activities. These changes lead to the person making poor eye contact and having little or no facial expression of emotion as well as having little or no interest in social contacts.

For more information

on first episode psychosis, please call Behavioral Healthcare Options, Inc. at

702-364-1484 or toll-free
1-800-280-3782, TTY 711

Sources:

thenationalcouncil.org; store.samhsa.gov;
medicine.yale.edu

Tiene derecho a recibir ayuda e información en su idioma sin costo. Para solicitar un intérprete, llame al número de teléfono gratuito para miembros que se encuentra en su tarjeta de identificación del plan o los documentos de su plan.



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Why be concerned about a first episode of psychosis?

The first episode of having psychosis can be the beginning of very serious illnesses such as schizophrenia or a bipolar mood disorder. Early diagnosis and treatment gives a person the best chance of recovering, and it helps prevent the severe complications that can occur in untreated illness. However, the symptoms of psychosis can often limit a person's ability to realize that he or she is ill. These symptoms can also be overwhelming for family and friends to understand, so there is a temptation to ignore the problems in hope that they will go away on their own. When symptoms are allowed to persist, the result is often a worsening harm to the person's long-term ability to function. With early intervention there is a much better chance of limiting disruption to the person's life. Below is information about the symptoms of psychosis, facts about its frequency and causes, and specifics about the various interventions that are important for effective treatment.

First Episode Psychosis



Behavioral Healthcare Options, Inc.



Who is at risk?

The most common age when symptoms of psychosis first begin is 18–24 years old. Males tend to have psychotic episodes earlier than females by one to two years. Approximately 3 in 100 people will experience psychosis in their lifetimes, and about 100,000 adolescents and young adults in the U.S. experience a first episode of psychosis each year. (National Council for Behavioral Health, 2017).



Causes of psychosis

Our genetic make-up determines how vulnerable we are to having a psychotic illness. If an individual has this vulnerability, then an episode of illness can be triggered by various biological and environmental causes. Triggers include a wide variety of factors, for example, infections, birth trauma, substance use, and high stress situations (such as major life changes, traumatic events, loss of a loved one, and poverty).



Early treatment and intervention

The most important thing to note about treatment for first episode psychosis is the importance of early intervention. The longer the illness is left untreated, the greater the disruption to the person's family, friends, studies, and work. In addition, illnesses such as schizophrenia and bipolar illness are progressive, meaning that the longer that symptoms persist, the greater the harm to the person's long-term function. If psychosis is detected and treated early, many problems can be prevented.

Antipsychotic medication is central to treatment. These drugs have potential side effects, however, there are many different agents available. If problems occur, it is important to work with the prescriber because it is usually possible to find a drug that is both effective and tolerable. For patients who may struggle to comply with taking a daily dose of medication, there are several drugs available in long-acting injection form.



Benefits of early intervention

Research has documented the following benefits of early intervention and continued treatment:

- Less treatment resistance and lower risk of relapse back into illness
- Reduced risk for suicide
- Reduced disruptions to work or school attendance
- Retention of social skills/support
- Decreased need for hospitalization
- More rapid recovery/better prognosis
- Reduced family disruption and distress



Coordinated specialty care

The coordinated specialty care treatment model has proven to be effective with first episode psychosis. Psychotherapy and case management play important roles in treatment along with several other interventions. This model provides a high intensity of services to individuals in need and is comprised of five key elements:

- **Case Management:** A person-centered care model is utilized by a case manager who helps patients and family members to navigate the treatment options.
- **Medication/Primary Care:** Supporting the importance of medication compliance even after symptom improvement.
- **Psychotherapy:** Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is a proven evidenced-based modality for psychosis.
- **Family Education and Support:** Family members can play a crucial role in the recovery process for someone who has experienced a first episode of psychosis. Education and support allows them to be the most effective in this role.
- **Supported employment and education:** These activities help to foster autonomy and help the patient in setting appropriate goals. They also help maintain social connections.