

PSYCHOSIS

Psychosis is a brain disorder characterized by problems in thinking and perceptions. Someone with psychosis may experience hallucinations, confused thoughts, delusions and unusual behaviour.

WHO GETS PSYCHOSIS?

- Anyone in any culture.
- Males and females.
- Approximately 1-2% of people will experience a psychotic episode at some stage in their life.
- Psychotic illnesses (such as schizophrenia) usually first appear in adolescents and young adults.
- Drug use puts you at higher risk.

PHASES OF PSYCHOSIS

EARLY PSYCHOSIS - PRODROMAL PHASE

Common signs of early psychosis include changes in behaviour and feelings such as:

- Feelings that others are watching them
- Depressed or anxious
- Mood swings
- Changes in sleeping patterns
- Appetite changes
- Lack of motivation
- Social withdrawal
- Lack of ability to focus
- Unusual behaviour
- Weird imagination
- Hearing voices that other people can't hear
- Lack of personal hygiene

These signs vary from person to person and can last months.

ACUTE PHASE

During this stage the typical symptoms of psychosis are most noticeable and therefore easily diagnosed. Treatment will usually begin during this phase and hospitalization may be necessary.

RECOVERY PHASE

During recovery, some symptoms of the acute phase may still be present, but with treatment most people recover from their first episode of psychosis and return to the normal daily routines. During this phase, it is important to learn more about the illness in order to help keep it under control and live life to the fullest.

WHAT CAUSES PSYCHOSIS?

It is believed that various biological, genetic and environmental factors combined may play in a role in one's vulnerability to developing psychosis.

Sometimes a stressful life event or drug abuse can trigger the onset of psychosis. One's vulnerability to developing psychosis is a complex interaction of genetics and other factors.

EARLY INTERVENTION IS IMPORTANT

Often people do not seek help when the first signs of psychosis emerge. Why? Maybe they don't believe there is anything wrong or they are confused as to what is going on with them. However, the longer the individual waits to get treatment, the greater the interference with schoolwork and relationships, along with the deterioration of normal accepted behaviour. Getting help early minimizes the risk of disruption in daily life and is critical to a successful recovery.

TREATMENT FOR PSYCHOSIS

Treatment for psychosis includes antipsychotic medication, individual and family counselling, and support to help the individual get back to their normal daily routines. Treatment also includes educating the individual on the disorder and encouraging healthy living. Focus will also be on decreasing the risk factors to prevent relapse and aid in a successful recovery. Treatment will depend on the severity of the symptoms and how long they have been present along with the possible causes.

WHAT CAN FRIENDS AND FAMILY DO?

If someone you know shows any of the signs of early psychosis (as discussed earlier), it is important they seek help. The first contact should be their family doctor; he or she will be able to refer them to a specialist. Having a loved one with psychosis is not going to be easy. There will be setbacks so you must be patient, positive and never give up hope.

A few tips to keep in mind:

- Educate yourself as much as possible about the mental illness to fully understand what is going on.
- Be supportive; the person may know something isn't right and may be scared.
- Be open-minded and listen.
- Avoid making critical comments and pressuring them.

- Limit stress and keep a calm environment.
- Be positive and supportive.
- Be consistent.
- Set limits as to acceptable behaviour.
- Put yourself first.
- Do not neglect other family and friends.
- Help maintain and encourage treatment.
- Just be there for them.
- Go to family counselling.

Will someone with psychosis recover?

Recovery varies for everyone. However, with a plan, support and proper treatment, many people recover.



CHECK THESE OUT:

- <http://earlypsychosis.medicine.dal.ca>
- <http://www.cmha.ca>
- <http://www.iepa.org.au>