

## Psychosis

Psychosis is a mental health disorder characterized by disruptions in a person's thoughts and perceptions that make it difficult for them to understand what is real and what is not. These disruptions are categorized as visual and auditory hallucinations, delusions, incoherent speech and behavior changes.



## Signs & Symptoms

People experiencing psychosis may behave strangely, hear voices or see things that don't exist. They also may be frightened, confused or withdrawn. Individuals experiencing psychosis can experience a range of symptoms, but most commonly experience hallucinations, delusions or both. Common signs of psychosis include:

- Hearing, seeing, or tasting something that others do not
- Persistent unusual thoughts or beliefs
- Intense and inappropriate emotional reactions or no emotional reactions
- Withdrawing from friends or family
- Trouble concentrating or thinking clearly

## Causes & Risk Factors

The exact cause of psychosis is not known, but teenagers and young adults are at increased risk of experiencing an episode of psychosis because of hormonal changes that happen in the brain during puberty. Other causes that can contribute to developing psychosis are genetics, traumatic events, and physical illness or injuries. Risk factors for developing psychosis include:

- Substance use (marijuana, LSD, amphetamines)
- Existing mental health conditions - psychosis can be a symptom of a schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, bipolar disorder or depression
- Serious injuries or illnesses such as a traumatic brain injury, brain tumor or stroke

## Diagnosis & Treatment

A mental health professional can diagnose an individual with psychosis based on a physical evaluation and a psychological evaluation to rule out other mental health disorders. Research has shown that the earlier individuals receive treatment, the better their long-term quality of life will be. Treatment plans commonly consist of psychotherapy such as cognitive behavioral therapy or family counseling, and medications to help reduce hallucinations and delusions. Coordinated Specialty Care (CSC) has also been shown to help. CSC uses a team of health professionals and specialists who work with an individual to create a treatment plan based on life goals, while involving family members as much as possible.

Source – National Alliance on Mental Illness: <https://www.nami.org/earlypsychosis>