

Mental Illness with Psychosis: What is it and how to get help

Approximately 3% of the population develops a mental illness with psychosis in their lifetime, and **many recover**

Mental illnesses with psychosis often begin between the ages of 15-25

- Adolescents and young adults are just starting to develop their own identity, form lasting relationships, and make plans for their careers and future
- The longer a mental disorder with psychosis goes untreated, the more vulnerable a young person is to experiencing increased illness and symptom severity, poorer social functioning, lower employment rates, higher rates of substance use and abuse, and greater disability

Psychosis may involve difficulties in:

- ...accurately perceiving and/or processing the world
- ...organizing speech and/or behavior

Symptoms of Psychosis

- ❖ Hallucinations (*can affect any of the 5 senses*): See, hear, taste, smell, or feel things that are not there
- ❖ Delusions: False beliefs that people hold strongly, despite all evidence that their beliefs are not true; for example, a person experiencing a delusion might believe he/she is being watched or followed
- ❖ Confused thinking: Occurs when a person's thoughts don't make sense; thoughts can be jumbled together, or they can be too fast or too slow. Confused thinking can lead to a hard time concentrating or remembering anything
- ❖ Mood or behavior changes: For example, quick changes in mood, feeling cut off from the rest of the world, not bathing, dressing, or otherwise caring for the self as usual, or laughing at an inappropriate time

<p style="text-align: center;">Psychosis Risk State</p> <p>How do you recognize if someone is at “high risk?”</p> <p>Symptoms of a psychosis risk state may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...having odd perceptual experiences ...jumbled thoughts and confusion ...trouble speaking clearly ...unnecessary fear ...declining interest in people, activities, and self-care ...deterioration in functioning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ work / school / hygiene <p><i>NOTE: Many people have these experiences and are not at high risk; it is more concerning if these experiences are distressing or interfere with daily life (school, work, social relationships)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Psychosis Risk State vs. Psychosis</p> <p>Psychosis and Psychosis Risk are often differentiated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Frequency, intensity, & impairment/severity ➤ Degree of conviction ➤ Doubt, question and insight <p>Psychosis Risk Examples:</p> <p><i>“I’m pretty sure the man in the black suit is following me, but that doesn’t make any sense, right?”</i></p> <p><i>“I think I hear footsteps at night, but no one else does. I don’t see anything when I go and check, so I don’t know.”</i></p> <p>Some doubt and insight keep these in the “risk” phase</p>
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What can you do if someone has psychosis or is at risk?

- ❖ Be alert to early warning signs of psychosis and how to identify them
- ❖ Be caring/supportive
- ❖ Promote a calm, structured environment
- ❖ Promote acceptance/decrease stigma

Why should you consider seeking help or make a referral?

- ❖ **Hope...** research suggests that if identified early, we can make a positive difference in the lives of individuals with psychosis

To get more information, request education, make referrals, or request consultations, contact Maryland EIP: