

A Guide for Patients and Families

Psychosis



Psychosis happens when a person loses touch with reality. It is not a specific illness, but rather a syndrome showing some degree of disturbance in perception and judgement. It is a distressing condition that affects a person's thoughts, feelings, communication, and behaviour.

Around 1 in 50 people experience a psychotic episode in their lifetime. When a person experiences psychosis, they may experience hallucinations where they hear voices or see things that do not exist, or disordered thinking or delusions which are false beliefs that they are going to be harmed or that people are talking about them.

Causes

The exact causation of psychosis is thought to be related to neurological and biochemical changes that occur in a person's brain during their teenage and early adulthood years. There are other factors such as genetics or the use of recreational drugs or a history of intermittent brief psychotic symptoms that may predispose someone to developing a psychotic disorder.

However, most people suffering from a psychotic disorder do not have these risk factors. If a person shows signs of psychosis and has these risk factors, it would be best to seek evaluation as soon as possible.



Signs & Symptoms

Some of these forms of disturbances show up as:

- Perceptual disturbances such as feelings that things around have changed.
- Mood disturbances such as anxiety, depression, mood swings, irritability, and anger.





- Cognitive disturbances such as poor attention and concentration, difficulties in thinking, suspiciousness, and unusual beliefs.
- Behavioural disturbances such as change in sleep and appetite patterns, social withdrawal, loss of interest in things, deterioration in occupation and academic functioning.

Diagnosis & Treatment

People can recover fully from psychosis as the condition is highly treatable. The sooner the treatment, the better the outcome of recovery.

There are also new and effective medicines, as well as improved treatment programmes now that optimize a person's recovery.

Besides medication, counselling, and psychotherapy, practical assistance such as getting help with school or work and arranging accommodation are other important aspects of treatment.



Institute of Mental Health (IMH) Early Psychosis Intervention Programme (EPIP) team works closely with healthcare professionals in other hospitals, polyclinics and social agencies to help spot the early signs of mental health challenges among those aged 16 – 40. EPIP also works with educational institutions and youth workers to identify the onset of psychosis among young people.

Besides seeing clients at outpatient clinics, EPIP emphasises psychosocial programmes, run at Club EPIP, that empowers people in recovery by addressing issues relating to social skills, stigma, leading a healthy lifestyle and cognitive remediation, just to name a few. The aim of these is to meaningfully restore people to their roles in society.

For more information on EPIP please call 6389-2972 between 9am to 5pm on Mondays to Fridays for enquiries.

IMH also provides assessment and treatment for psychosis in individuals of other age groups. To make an appointment to see a doctor, please call the IMH appointment line at 6389-2200.