



WHAT CAN FAMILIES AND FRIENDS DO?

RECOGNIZE

Learn about psychosis and understand the impact of symptoms:

- School/work performance declines
- Family relationships decline
- Social life declines
- Person becomes more and more isolated
- Risk for suicide increases.

RESPOND

- Get the person help as soon as possible. Treatment delays can cause illness to worsen and be less responsive to treatment
- Untreated psychosis may permanently impair thinking and learning abilities and cause memory loss
- Early treatment maximizes chances for better long-term outcomes
- The longer the illness is untreated, the longer it is likely to take for symptoms to go away
- The lesser the degree of remission, the greater the chances of further episodes.

REFER: *Who should I call?*


- Take the initiative. If symptoms of psychosis are occurring, ask your doctor for an assessment or referral.
- Remember, if the ill person thinks hallucinations or delusions are real, they may resist treatment.
- Be persistent. Find a doctor who is familiar with psychosis.
- Assessment and treatment must be done by people who are well-qualified, and who have empathy with patients and their families. *It is important to include the family as part of the ill person's treatment team.*
- Assessment and treatment are also available through regional Mental Health centres throughout the province.
- The Ministry of Health Services and the Ministry of Child and Family Development are the ministries responsible for Mental Health Services in BC.
- If a young person is still in school, the school counsellor will be able to assist with a referral.
- Some health regions have excellent Early Psychosis Intervention (EPI) clinics, to whom anyone can refer. Check with BCSS or your regional health authority.

WHERE CAN WE GET MORE HELP?

The British Columbia Schizophrenia Society (BCSS) is a family-based organization. We understand what it's like to live with schizophrenia.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

British Columbia Schizophrenia Society



201 - 6011 Westminster Hwy.
Richmond, BC V7C 4V4
Tel: 604-270-7841 Fax: 604-270-9861
Toll Free: 1-888-888-0029
bcss.prov@telus.net www.bcss.org

OUR MISSION:

"To alleviate the suffering caused by schizophrenia"

OUR MANDATE:

- Family support and education
- Public education, awareness and understanding
- Advocacy for better services for people with schizophrenia and their families
- Promote research into the treatment and cure for schizophrenia

Partners in Care




Partenaires en soins de santé

www.janssen-ortho.com

Supported by an educational grant from JANSEN-ORTHO Inc.

This information not to be substituted for the advice of a professional. Always consult a physician regarding individual circumstances.



SCHIZOPHRENIA

EARLY PSYCHOSIS INTERVENTION



We'd like to change your mind





EARLY PSYCHOSIS INTERVENTION

WHAT IS PSYCHOSIS?

Psychosis can happen to anyone. Like any other illness, it can be treated.

The word *psychosis* is used to describe medical conditions that affect the brain, so that there is a loss of contact with reality.

When someone becomes ill in this way, it is called a *psychotic episode*.

FACTS

- Psychosis often strikes young people in their prime
- Psychosis distorts the senses, making it very difficult for the ill person to tell what is real from what is not real
- Usual age of occurrence of first episode psychosis is 16-25
- Men and women are affected with equal frequency
- Age of onset is usually younger for men than for women
- Medical assessment and treatment are necessary
- Early assessment, treatment, and education greatly improve outcomes for the individual and their family.

WHY IS EARLY INTERVENTION SO IMPORTANT?

A first episode of psychosis can be a confusing and traumatic experience for a young person. It also affects their family and peers.

Since the onset of psychosis associated with schizophrenia most often occurs in the late teens or early twenties, it can adversely affect the person's developing a sense of self-identity as well as their relationships, education and career goals.

“TOXIC” PSYCHOSIS

Preliminary evidence shows delayed treatment may cause the illness to become more *biologically entrenched* and less responsive to treatment.

Early diagnosis and treatment can lead to significantly improved recovery and outcome.

By contrast, the longer the illness goes untreated, the longer it takes for remission of symptoms, the lesser the degree of remission, and the greater the chance of early relapse.

There can be critical damage to a young person's life when psychosis is ignored. It is important to recognize early warning signs and get proper medical help as soon as possible.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

Early signs of psychosis may be difficult to detect. Behavioural changes can be mistaken for normal changes of adolescence or responses to stressful events. The important

point to look for is if these changes get worse or do not go away.

Behaviours also may be significant if they are distressing, disruptive, or particularly out of character for the individual or creating concern among others.

Early signs vary from one person to another. Below are some possible signs. Remember, these changes may not be early signs but it is a good idea to get them checked out.

Thinking and Speech

- Peculiar use of words, odd language structures, irrational statements
- Unusual sensitivity to stimuli
- Memory and concentration problems
- Bizarre beliefs — preoccupation with the occult or religion, belief that things have “changed” around them, or that they possess special powers
- Hallucinations — seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting or feeling things that are not there.

Emotional

- Persistent depression or anxiety
- Sustained irritability
- Laughing or crying for no reason
- Rapid mood changes

Social

- Severe deterioration of social and family relationships
- Dropping out of activities — or out of life in general
- Unexpected aggression
- Suspiciousness
- A new fear of people
- Sensitivity or irritability when touched
- Refusing to touch people or objects, wearing gloves, etc.

Behaviours

- Deterioration of personal hygiene
- Severe sleep problems
- Agitation
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Cutting oneself, threats of self-mutilation
- Excessive writing without meaning
- Strange posturing
- Bizarre behaviour

Personality

- Shift in basic personality
- Reckless behaviours that are out of character
- Significant drop in motivation affecting grades, activities, job performance, relationships with friends and family

