

## What is Psychosis?

There is a group of illnesses which disrupt the functioning of the brain so much, they cause a condition called psychosis. When someone experiences psychosis they are unable to distinguish what is real — there is a loss of contact with reality. Most people are able to recover from an episode of psychosis.

## What are the symptoms?

Among symptoms doctors look for are:

- ④ *Confused thinking*  
When acutely ill, people with psychotic symptoms experience disordered thinking. The everyday thoughts that let us live our daily lives become confused and don't join up properly.
- ④ *Delusions*  
A delusion is a false belief held by a person which is not held by others of the same cultural background.
- ④ *Hallucinations*  
The person sees, hears, feels, smells or tastes something that is not actually there. The hallucination is often of disembodied voices which no one else can hear.

## What causes Psychosis?

The causes of psychosis are not fully understood. They are likely to be a combination of hereditary and other factors. It is probable that some people are born with a predisposition to develop this kind of illness, and that certain things — for example, stress or use of drugs such as marijuana, LSD or speed — can trigger their first episode.

Some people experience a brief form of psychosis which lasts only a few days or weeks. Some people experience a few episodes of psychosis only. Some people experience psychosis associated with a longer-term illness such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.

## How many people develop Psychosis?

About three in a hundred people will experience psychosis at some time in their lives. Most of these will be first affected in their late teens and early twenties.

## How is Psychosis treated?

Treatment can do much to reduce and even eliminate the symptoms. Treatment should generally include a combination of medication and community support. Both are usually essential for the best outcome.

- ④ *Medication*  
Certain medications assist the brain to restore its usual chemical balance. This then helps reduce or get rid of some of the symptoms.
- ④ *Community support programs*  
This support should include information; accommodation; help with finding suitable work; training and education; psychosocial rehabilitation and mutual support groups. Understanding and acceptance by the community is also very important.

## How do I find out more?

It is important to ask your doctor about any concerns you have. SANE Australia also produces a range of easy-to-read publications and multimedia resources on mental illness. For more information about this topic see:

- ④ *SANE Guide to Schizophrenia and other Psychotic Illness*  
Explains what it means to have a psychotic illness such as schizophrenia, examining effective treatments and what family and friends can do to help.
- ④ *Schizophrenia DVD Kit* (Includes a 37 minute DVD and *SANE Guide to Schizophrenia and other Psychotic Illness*)  
People who've experienced illness and their carers talk about the things which have helped them cope better. See above for details on the SANE Guide included.
- ④ *SANE Guide to Medication and other Treatments*  
Explains how all the different aspects of treatment work, by looking at clinical care, medication, support in the community and helping yourself.
- ④ *Voices: The Auditory Hallucinations Project*  
An Audio CD that explains how it feels to hear voices and what can be done to help.

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