Psychosis describes conditions that affect the mind when there is some loss of contact with reality. When someone becomes ill in this way, it is called a psychotic episode. During this time, the person may not know what is real and what is not real. Getting treatment early increases the chance of a recovery.

Psychosis behaviors

- Delusions (false beliefs)
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that others do not see or hear)
- Nonsense speech
- Behavior that does not fit the situation

A person in a psychotic episode may also have:
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Sleep problems
- Problems being social
- Trouble functioning in everyday life

Early warning signs

A person will often show changes in their behavior before psychosis develops. Early warning signs may include:
- Drop in grades or job performance
- Trouble thinking clearly or concentrating
- Suspicious or paranoid ideas
- Uneasy feeling around other people
- Spending more time alone
- Intense new ideas, strange feelings, or having no feelings at all
- Caring less about personal hygiene or appearance
- Hard time telling reality from fantasy
- Confused speech or trouble communicating

Any one of these items by itself may not mean that there is a problem, but someone with many of these should talk to a mental health professional. A qualified psychologist, psychiatrist, or trained social worker will be able to make a diagnosis and help develop a treatment plan.
Difference between psychosis and schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is a mental illness that has periods of psychosis, but someone with psychosis may not be schizophrenic.

A person must have psychotic symptoms for at least six months in order to be diagnosed with schizophrenia. However, a person can have psychosis and never be diagnosed with schizophrenia or any other mental illness. This is because there are many different causes of psychosis, such as being sleep deprived, some medical conditions, certain prescription medicines, and abusing alcohol or other drugs.

People can recover

It is possible for a person to recover from psychosis with early diagnosis and the right treatment. Many people who get early treatment never have another psychotic episode. For other people, recovery means the ability to live a fulfilling and productive life, even if psychotic symptoms return sometimes.

If you think someone is having a psychotic episode

If you think someone you know is experiencing psychosis, encourage the person to seek treatment as early as possible. Psychosis can be treated and getting help early increases the chances for recovery. You can call an area mental health center, ask your family doctor for a referral, or check with your insurance company for a list of network providers.

If someone having a psychotic episode is in distress or you are concerned about their safety, consider taking them to the nearest emergency room or calling 911.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)