

Understanding Risk

Adapted from the UC San Diego Care Program website [1]

Getting help

Have you or someone you know experienced recent troublesome changes in behavior, thoughts, or emotions described below? Do you or someone you know have a recent diagnosis or newly emerging symptoms of psychosis? The UCSF Path Program may be the right fit for you. Contact us at (415) 476-7278.

What is psychosis?

The word *psychosis* is used to describe conditions which affect the mind and involve some loss of contact with reality. When someone has these experiences, it is called a *psychotic episode*.

Psychosis is most likely to occur in young adults and is quite common. Around three out of every 100 people experience a psychotic episode, making psychosis more common than diabetes. Psychosis can happen to anyone. Like other illnesses, it can be treated.

Psychosis is not

- NOT caused by childhood experiences
- NOT caused by poverty
- NOT caused by bad parenting
- NOT a split personality
- NOT the result of any action or personal failure by the individual
- NOT always schizophrenia

Early risk signs

A state of high clinical risk does not indicate an unavoidable progression of symptoms or development of a psychotic disorder.

- Unusual thoughts
- Confusion about what is real and what is imaginary
- Perceptual disturbances
- Having a strong belief that is firmly held in spite of contrary evidence or believing that something or someone is referring to you

- Social withdrawal
- Feeling suspicious
- Feeling anxious/irritable
- Concentration difficulties
- Feeling depressed

What causes psychosis?

Various theories have been offered as to what causes psychosis, but there is still much research to be done to be able to say definitively. There is some scientific evidence indicating that psychosis is caused by a combination of biological factors which create a vulnerability to experiencing psychotic symptoms during adolescence or early adult life.

Psychosis typically first occurs between the ages of 12-30 years. Approximately 100,000 adolescents and young adults in the United States experience a first psychotic episode each year.

How is psychosis treated?

Psychosis is treatable and while some individuals recover completely from their first episode, others may experience psychotic symptoms over time but can learn to effectively cope with them. One of the key research findings has been that there is a clear link between duration of untreated psychosis and prognosis. As such, it is important to consult with a mental health provider as soon as possible.

Treatment can vary, and involve one or a combination of the following:

- Medical: Medication and monitoring
- Psychosocial: Individual or group counselling and education
- Family support and education
- Community collaboration

Contact Us
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Links

[1] <http://ucsdcareprogram.com/other-studies/>