

## What is Psychosis?

Psychosis is the experience of a loss of contact with reality; it often involves seeing, hearing and believing things that aren't real. Psychosis is not a diagnosis but a symptom associated with a range of mental and physical illnesses.

### Did You Know:

- ▶ Psychosis is more common than many people realize. Up to three percent of people will experience a psychotic episode in their lifetime.
- ▶ Psychosis often surfaces between the ages of 16 and 23; however, psychosis can be experienced at any age.
- ▶ Psychosis is episodic; the person suffering from a psychotic disorder often alternates between productive and impaired functioning.
- ▶ Psychosis is treatable; the earlier, the better.

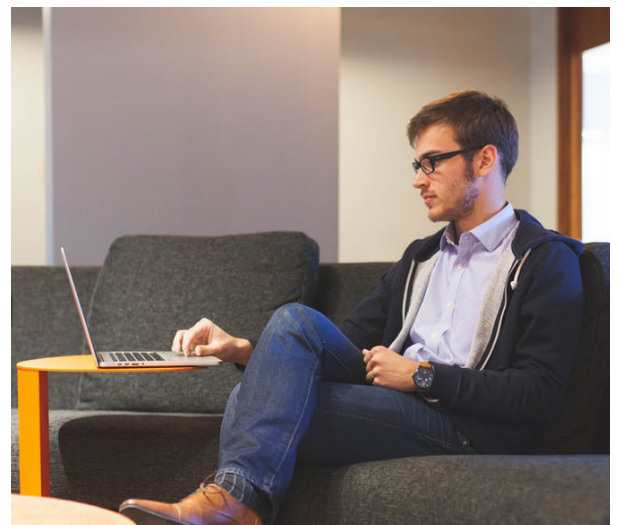
## What Causes Psychosis?

Research indicates that psychosis is associated with genetic, biological and environmental factors. Early adulthood is the peak age of psychosis onset. Experimentation with substances can trigger psychosis in vulnerable individuals, as can mental or physical illness, trauma or extreme stress.

## Symptoms Include:

Psychosis symptoms can include bizarre speech or writing, disorganized behavior, fear and anger, social withdrawal, and changes in sleep and eating patterns. However, the two signature symptoms include:

- ▶ Delusions, in which a person believes things that most people would agree are not true;
- ▶ Hallucinations, in which a person sees, hears or feels something that others don't.



## Treatment

Early recognition and treatment of psychosis are critical to full recovery. When comprehensive treatment begins after initial onset of symptoms, a person with psychosis can lead a productive, fulfilling life. Early treatment may protect an individual's brain from changes that occur in the first years of illness. Treatment for psychosis usually involves a combination of medication and therapy.