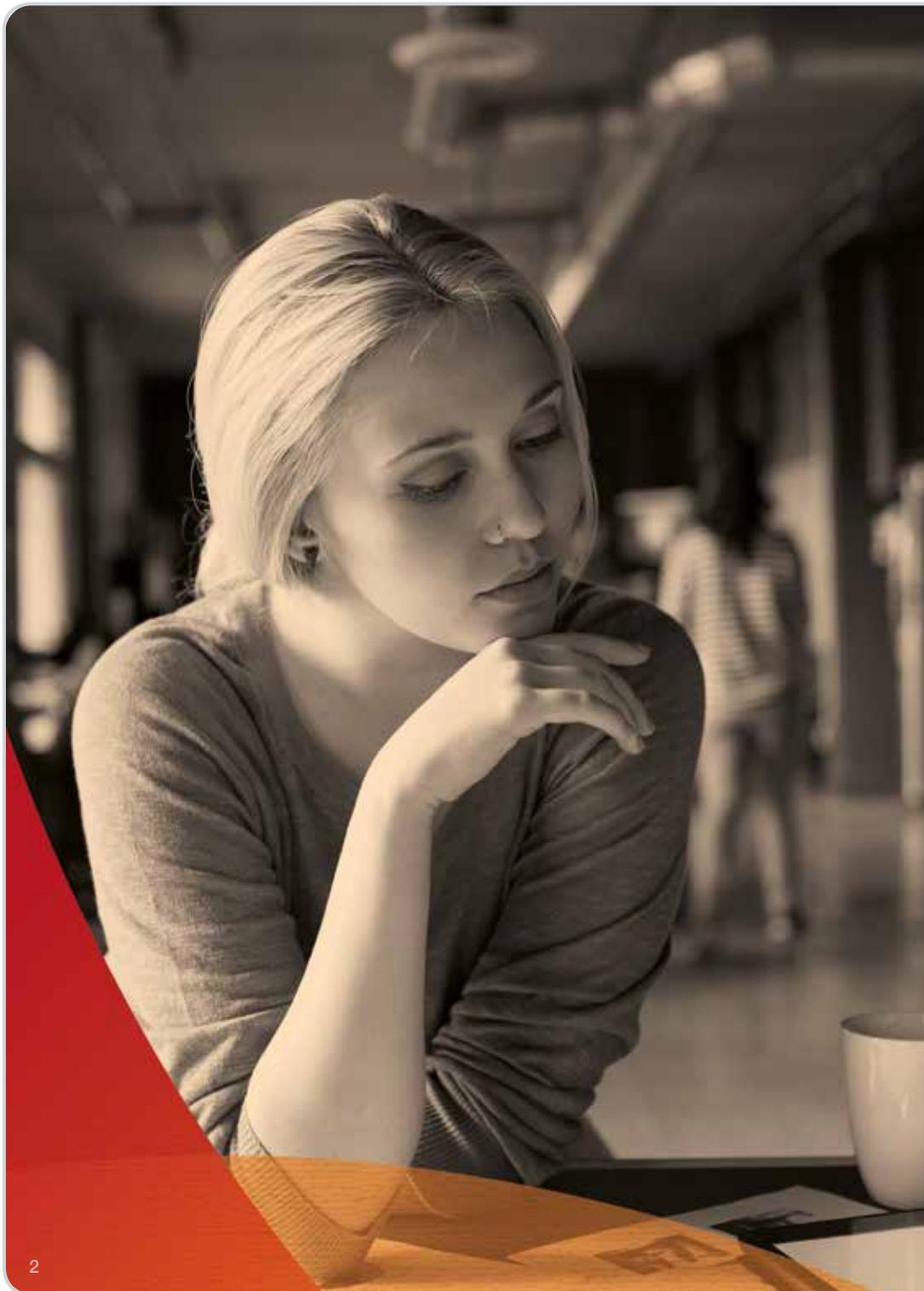


UNDERSTANDING PSYCHOSIS

A GUIDE FOR CONSUMERS





ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

You've been given this booklet because you have been experiencing symptoms that together form a condition called psychosis.

Your first episode of psychosis can be particularly distressing and confusing, not only for you but also for your family and friends, because the experience is so unfamiliar and difficult to understand.

Psychosis has many causes and can occur in a number of different mental illnesses, including schizophrenia.

Here you'll find answers to common questions you may have, and practical advice on what you can do to help yourself.



WHAT IS PSYCHOSIS?

When you experience an episode of psychosis, you are unable to distinguish between what is real and what is not.

Psychosis is a condition in which the chemical functioning of your brain is so disrupted that it changes how you think, feel and act.

Psychosis can affect your thoughts, perceptions, emotions and behaviour. This may be frightening, but like many other conditions psychosis is treatable and can happen to anyone.

Who gets psychosis?

13in

Anyone can experience psychosis. Here in Australia, it affects about 2 or 3 in 100 people.¹ Symptoms usually start in the late teens, twenties or thirties.

What is the difference between psychosis and schizophrenia?

Psychosis is considered a condition or symptom of mental illness. You can experience psychosis or an altered perception of reality in the course of a number of different mental illnesses such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. In other words, schizophrenia is a psychiatric disease that is often characterised by psychosis as well as other symptoms.

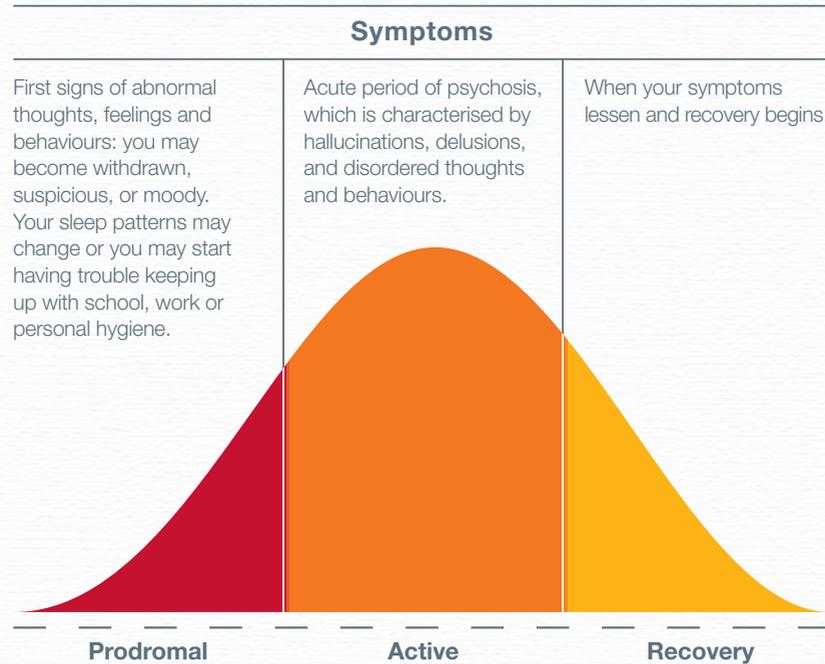
What causes psychosis?

No one knows for sure, and no one understands why some people develop it and others don't. It's probably a complicated mix of biological and environmental factors, such as stress, that make some people more vulnerable to psychosis.



FIRST-EPIISODE PSYCHOSIS

First-onset psychosis has three phases: prodromal, active and recovery



Visual representation of the three phases of first-onset psychosis.

The active phase has three groups of symptoms.

Positive Symptoms are 'extra' feelings or behaviours that aren't usually present such as delusions or hallucinations. They can be intense, troublesome, and distressing.



Delusions are fixed beliefs or ideas that aren't true. You may feel harassed or spied on, believe you have special powers, or you might believe everyday objects are sending you messages.



Hallucinations are tastes, smells, sights, sounds and touch that are not real but may appear very real to you, e.g. you might see people and things that are not there. The most common hallucinations are hearing imaginary voices.



Negative Symptoms are a reduced ability to act and feel normally. For example, you may lose interest in everyday activities, feel out of touch with people, experience a lack of feelings and emotions, or be less able to experience pleasure than you usually do.



Disorganised Symptoms include confused thinking and difficulty in planning, making decisions and interpreting other people's emotions and motivations. As well as disorganised thinking, you may experience disorganised speech and behaviour such as talking or dressing strangely.



HOW IS PSYCHOSIS TREATED?

Early detection and treatment are important for improving your chances of recovery.

Delaying treatment can make dealing with psychosis harder. Also, long periods of untreated psychosis can isolate you from your social support structures – untreated psychosis means you will be less likely to remain employed, in school, or keep in touch with family, friends and others in your social network.

Treatment and recovery from psychosis

If you have just had your first episode of psychosis, you will most likely be receiving treatment from a psychiatrist. Most people are treated at home, but it's possible that you will require a stay in hospital to keep you safe and reduce stress.

Treatment for psychosis involves medication in addition to psychological and psychosocial support, during and following an acute phase.

Antipsychotic medication is used to treat psychotic symptoms



In schizophrenia, antipsychotic agents are used to treat the symptoms of psychosis by targeting the imbalance in brain chemicals. Antipsychotic medications reduce or remove some of the symptoms and make it less likely for you to have another episode of psychosis.

Psychological treatment or 'talking therapies' help you to cope with stress and reduce conflict



Forming a good relationship with a mental health professional will help you to develop coping skills and manage symptoms.

Psychosocial education encourages your friends and family members to support you



By understanding your illness and being part of your support network, your friends and family members will also learn how to cope with your illness and learn how to reduce stress.



HOW CAN YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY HELP YOU?

Psychosis is a condition that not only affects you, but also your family, friends and others in your social network. You don't have to cope with your illness alone – your support network can do a lot to help you out.

Here are some suggestions for getting help:

- Have conversations with your friends and family members about how they can support you
- Ask them to watch for worsening symptoms – you may not be aware of these
- Ask them to accompany you when you visit the doctor
- Ask someone to keep in contact with your doctors and case workers – healthcare professionals can advise your friend or relative and suggest ways they can help your recovery. Be assured your health professionals won't release private or confidential information
- Ask someone to keep other friends and relatives in your support circle informed of your progress
- Let them help you to maintain a daily routine at home, work or socially
- Get someone to remind you to take your medicine

Your support network can help you in an emergency

During a crisis episode, you may experience hallucinations, delusions, thought disorder, and disturbances in behaviour and emotions. At this time, you will need help from others.



Let your friends or relatives know in advance that if you have a psychotic episode, they need to get medical help quickly – an acute psychotic event is a medical emergency. They should phone the doctor or psychiatrist immediately.

Here is a list of emergency phone numbers they can call – note who they should call first.

Write the numbers down in the space below.

Police _____

Doctor _____

Psychiatrist _____

Case manager _____

Crisis support (24 hour access) _____

Other friends or family _____

EXPAND

YOUR KNOWLEDGE



If you, or your friends and relatives, would like to learn more about psychosis, some sources of information are listed below.

FOR YOU

Headspace

www.headspace.org.au

Lifeline

13 11 14

Mental Health Council of Australia

www.mhca.org.au

Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia Inc (MIFA)

www.mifa.org.au

Reach Out

www.reachout.com.au

Sane Australia

1800 187 263 www.sane.org

FOR YOUR FRIEND AND RELATIVES

Association of Relatives and Friends of the Mentally Ill (ARAFMI)

www.arafmi.org

Carers Australia

www.carersaustralia.com.au

Reference: 1. Early Psychosis Prevention and Intervention Centre (EPPIC). Factsheet 1 – What is Psychosis? Available at: http://oyh.org.au/sites/oyh.org.au/files/factsheets/fact1_whatIs.pdf. Accessed: 21 September 2017.

Janssen-Cilag Pty Ltd. ABN 47 000 129 975. 1-5 Khartoum Rd, Macquarie Park NSW 2113. Phone: 1800 226 334. CP-02184. S&SW. HJP0449a. Date of Preparation: September 2017.