

Information on Psychosis for Teens:

The word psychosis is used to describe conditions that affect the mind, where there has been some loss of connection with reality.

Around 2 out of every 100 young people will experience a psychotic episode, making it more common than diabetes in young people, and it mostly happens for the first time when a young person is between 15 and 30 years old. Most will recover fully from the psychotic episode, but some will have ongoing problems.

Symptoms:

Confused thinking. Thoughts become confused and jumbled. It can be hard to think clearly enough to talk logically. It can be difficult for a person to concentrate during a conversation or to remember what is being said. Thinking can be much faster than usual or slowed down.

Hallucinations. People experiencing a psychotic illness may see, hear, feel, smell, or taste something that is not actually there. They might hear voices no one else can hear, see things that aren't there or feel something moving on their skin. They might feel cut off from the world around them, or that everything is unreal.

Delusions. Some people experiencing a psychotic illness may hold false beliefs known as delusions (such as that someone is trying to hurt them or control their thinking). A person may be convinced their delusion is real even if those around them challenge it, and they may find evidence that supports their delusion that seems illogical to others.

Changed feelings. How a person feels may change for no apparent reason. Some people may experience moods that swing from one extreme to another very quickly. For example, swinging from being very happy to feeling very heavily depressed. Some people's feelings may seem dampened or flat and they may show less emotion than other people.

Changed behaviour. People experiencing a psychotic illness may behave in ways that they did not behave before they became unwell. For example, they may become angry seemingly without cause, be very active, have no energy, have trouble sleeping or eating, have trouble socialising, or be fearful. These behaviours relate to their hallucinations, delusions and disordered thinking.

Cannabis And Psychosis:

Cannabis use can cause drug-induced psychosis, trigger the first episode of a psychotic illness, or make a pre-existing psychotic illness worse. Cannabis comes in three forms - as either marijuana, hashish or hash oil. People who have, or may be at risk of developing, a psychotic illness should avoid using cannabis.

Cannabis is the most widely used illicit drug. It is derived from the *Cannabis sativa* plant and comes in three forms: marijuana, hashish and hash oil. The chemicals in cannabis interfere with normal brain functioning. Cannabis use can cause drug-induced psychosis, trigger the first episode of a psychotic illness or make a pre-existing psychotic illness worse. People who have, or may be at risk of developing, a psychotic illness should avoid using cannabis.

Cannabis is a psychoactive drug

Cannabis contains a chemical commonly known as THC (delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol). THC is a psychoactive substance, which means that it travels in the bloodstream to the brain. It disrupts usual brain functioning and causes certain intoxicating effects, including:

- A feeling of relaxation and wellbeing
- Loss of inhibition
- Increased talkativeness
- A confused perception of space and time
- Reduced ability to concentrate and remember
- Reduced coordination – this makes it dangerous to drive or operate machinery while under the influence of the drug.

Heavy use may cause hallucinations

Other possible effects, which are more common with heavy cannabis use, include:

- Paranoia
- Confusion
- Anxiety.

Drug-induced psychosis

Cannabis use can cause a condition known as drug-induced psychosis. Symptoms usually appear quickly and last a relatively short time (a few days) until the effects of the cannabis wear off. Disorientation, memory problems and visual hallucinations are the most common symptoms.

People who already have a psychotic illness may experience longer lasting and more intense symptoms.

Cannabis effects last longer if you have a psychotic illness

The effects of cannabis begin within minutes and can last several hours. However, for people with a psychotic illness (such as schizophrenia), the effects can be longer lasting.

Cannabis can precipitate the first episode of psychosis

If someone has a predisposition to a psychotic illness, such as schizophrenia, use of drugs such as cannabis may trigger the first episode in what can be a lifelong, disabling condition. There is increasing evidence that regular cannabis use precedes and causes higher rates of psychotic illness. Psychotic illnesses are characterised by:

- **Delusions** – for example, the person believes they have special powers.
- **Hallucinations** – for example, the person hears voices or sees things that aren't really there.
- **Thought disorder** – for example, the person has difficulty organising their thoughts.

When people experience psychotic symptoms, they are unable to distinguish what is real. They lose contact with reality.

Psychotic symptoms can become worse

Cannabis use generally makes psychotic symptoms worse and lowers the chances of recovery from a psychotic episode. People with a psychotic illness who use drugs experience more delusions, hallucinations and other symptoms. They have a higher rate of hospitalisation for psychosis, and treatment is generally less effective. People with a psychotic illness should avoid using cannabis.

Useful Websites:

www.psychosissucks.ca

www.mindcheck.ca