

Psychosis, a medical illness of the brain - how to spot and stop psychosis early.

What's the most important thing for teachers of youth aged 16+ to know about psychosis?

All young people who may be experiencing psychosis need to be assessed by a doctor or mental health team as soon as possible. Youth 16-30 are at the age when psychosis normally first appears, and rapid medical treatment has been shown to have a big effect on how quickly and thoroughly people recover.

How can I help students get appropriate medical help? Who do I refer students with suspected psychosis to?

Contact your local mental health team or contact an early psychosis intervention (EPI) program if you have one in your area. The phone number for the local EPI program or mental health team is: _____

What signs should I watch out for? How do I know a student may be experiencing psychosis?

(The following is excerpted from Vancouver/Richmond Early Psychosis Program)

The following symptoms may indicate that an individual is experiencing psychosis. Frequently, people will display unusual behaviours before the onset of the acute psychotic episode.

Behavioural

- Strange posturing
- Odd or bizarre behaviour
- Feeling refreshed after much less sleep than normal
- Excessive writing without meaning
- Cutting oneself; threats of self-mutilation
- Deterioration of personal hygiene
- Hyperactivity or inactivity, or alternating between the two
- Staring without blinking - or blinking incessantly
- Agitation
- Severe sleep disturbances
- Drug or alcohol abuse (This may be a coping mechanism: self-medicating)

Thinking and Speech

- Things around them seem changed in some way
- Rapid speech that is difficult to interrupt
- Irrational statements
- Extreme preoccupation with religion or with the occult
- Peculiar use of words or odd language structures
- Unusual sensitivity to stimuli (noise, light, colours, textures)
- Memory problems
- Severe distractibility

Social

- Sensitivity and irritability when touched by others
- Refusal to touch persons or objects; wearing gloves, etc.
- Severe deterioration of social relationships
- Dropping out of activities - or out of life in general
- Social withdrawal, isolation, and reclusive
- Unexpected aggression
- Suspiciousness

Emotional

- Inappropriate laughter
- Inability to cry, or excessive crying
- Feelings of depression and anxiety
- Inability to express joy
- Euphoric mood Personality
- Reckless behaviours that are out of character
- Significantly prolonged drops in motivation or speech
- Shift in basic personality.