

Phases of Psychosis

Psychosis is thought to develop in three phases although the experience of each of these phases will be different for everyone.

First phase: PRODROMAL PHASE

Before the symptoms of psychosis started, there are often changes in feelings, thoughts and behaviour. This period is referred to as the prodromal phase or prodrome. The changes that occur at this time will vary from person to person. How long the prodromal phase lasts will also vary from person to person.

Some of the common changes in the prodromal phase include:

- ✦ Feeling sad, anxious or irritable
- ✦ Being suspicious of others
- ✦ Problems sleeping
- ✦ Wanting to be alone
- ✦ Difficulties concentrating
- ✦ Lack of energy

Most people who experience these types of changes do not develop symptoms of psychosis but some people do.

Second phase: ACUTE PHASE

It is in the acute phase that symptoms of psychosis begin. For example, a person may experience unusual beliefs or delusions, hallucinations such as hearing or seeing things that aren't there, and severe problems with thinking and motivation.

Treatment is needed to stop these symptoms. The earlier the person gets treatment, the better.

Third phase: RECOVERY PHASE

With the right treatment, most people will recover well from the acute phase. How long it takes to recover will vary from person to person. How much a person improves in recovery will also vary from person to person.

Following recovery from a first episode of psychosis, some people will never experience another episode (called a "relapse") of psychosis. Other people will experience relapses over time. However, there are things that can be done to reduce the risk of having a relapse.

Ways to reduce the risk of relapse

- Take medication as prescribed
- Learn skills to manage stress
- Get your family involved in your treatment
- Have a good "relapse prevention plan" in place

Getting the right treatment will improve recovery and lower the risk of relapse. In addition to medication, learning skills to deal with psychosis is an essential part of treatment.