

PSYCHOTIC DISORDERS



Psychotic disorders affect approximately three percent of Australian adults and are less common than depression and anxiety disorders (Sane Australia, 2005).

What is a Psychotic Disorder?

Psychotic disorders form a diverse group of illnesses that are serious and often treatable. Psychotic disorders affect the way a person may act, think, see, hear or feel, and makes it difficult for them to distinguish between what is real and not real.

There are different types of psychotic disorders. Some of these include:

- **Schizophrenia:** People with schizophrenia experience changes in behaviour as well as delusions and hallucinations for a period that exceeds six months.
- **Schizoaffective disorder:** People with this illness have symptoms of both schizophrenia and a mood disorder such as depression or bi-polar disorder.
- **Brief psychotic disorder:** People with this illness experience a sudden but short onset of psychotic behaviour that is often linked to a stressful event. Recovery is usually less than a month. See also: http://www.medicinenet.com/psychotic_disorders/article.htm



Signs and symptoms of psychotic disorders include but are not limited to:

- Hallucinations. These are internal sensory perceptions, such as sights or sounds that are not actually present. www.athealth.com/Consumer/disorders/Psychotic.html
- Delusions. These can be described as false, inaccurate beliefs the person holds onto even when he/she is presented with accurate information. www.athealth.com/Consumer/disorders/Psychotic.html
- Difficulties with concentration and completing work tasks
- Lacking energy and motivation in undertaking what were usual work tasks and activities
- Loss of interest in person hygiene
- Loss of interest in activities and becoming withdrawn and socially isolated
- Displaying inappropriate emotional responses eg laughing out of context
- Anxiety and mood swings, or other mood symptoms such as depression
- Slowed or unusual movements
- Displaying strange or odd behavior
- Disorganised or erratic speech often jumping from one topic to the next

What causes psychotic disorders?

The exact cause of psychotic disorders is unclear, however it is believed that a number of different biological, genetic and environmental factors can increase a person's risk of developing a psychotic disorder. Some of these risk factors include:

- Biological factors: There may be an imbalance of certain chemicals in the brain. The person may be particularly sensitive to or produce excessive amounts of a chemical called dopamine.
- Genetic factors: A history of psychotic illnesses in the family increases the risk.
- Environmental factors: Stress, drug abuse and major life changes and events can trigger an episode in people who are vulnerable to the disorder.

If you (or someone you know) are exhibiting signs of depression, you should seek help. Consider talking to your doctor or contact an organisation that can provide advice and support: www.beyondblue.org.au & www.mhfa.com.au. If changes need to be made in the workplace to support you, talk to your supervisor or to your [HR Adviser](#).

The University's Employee Assistance Program (<http://www.deakin.edu.au/hr/ohs/assistance.php>) may also assist.