Psychosis and schizophrenia in one page

What it is

What is psychosis?

Psychosis is when your mind loses touch with what is real. You may hear or see things others do not, or hold strong beliefs that are not true. It is a set of symptoms with many causes, not one illness, and it can be treated.

- About 1 in 200 adult Australians have it each year
- A first episode usually comes between teens and mid-30s
- Schizophrenia is one cause, not the only one

The signs

What are the symptoms of psychosis?

The main symptoms of psychosis are hallucinations, delusions, jumbled thinking or speech, and behaviour that is unusual for the person. Early signs often come first: pulling away from friends, losing motivation, and slipping at school or work.

- Hallucinations are sensing things others do not
- Delusions are fixed beliefs that are not true
- Thinking and speech can become jumbled

How a diagnosis happens

What happens at the first assessment?

It is a full assessment, ideally somewhere local and convenient, with the family's view sought where possible. Rights and service information should follow within 48 hours of entry, then a case manager and a written plan within weeks.

- A case manager is assigned within 5 days of assessment.

Treatment

What is headspace Early Psychosis?

Yes, a parent can refer. headspace Early Psychosis is a free program for ages 12 to 25 with early psychosis, or at risk of it. It takes referrals from any source and aims to assess within 48 hours.

- A GP can refer using headspace's checklist.

Medication

Why do I need regular blood tests and physical checks?

Because the 2026 schizophrenia guideline sets a standard timetable of physical checks for everyone taking these medicines, from the start. It is routine, not a sign something is wrong. Ask who orders each one.

- Weight and BMI are checked within the first 4 weeks.

Who diagnoses and who prescribes

Who prescribes my medication?

The PBS listing decides, not the job title. Most medicines for psychosis need only a streamlined authority code on the script. The one that needs regular blood tests is started under a psychiatrist and stays under one.

- Ask the team who writes the next script, and the start date.

What it costs

Is care for psychosis free?

Much of it is, if you stay public. headspace Early Psychosis is free, and so is public hospital care as a public patient. A private psychiatrist and PBS scripts cost money, and no government body measures the gaps people pay.

In danger? Call 000. Lifeline 13 11 14, text 0477 13 11 14, or chat online.

Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467. Free counselling by phone or video, any hour.

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