

Psychosis Fact Sheet

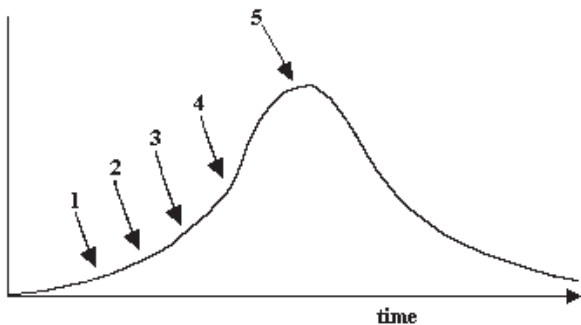
Course of Schizophrenia Onset

- Prodrome Phase
- First Psychotic Break
- Early stages of Schizophrenia

Prodrome Phase

The *Prodrome Phase* is categorized by changes in behavior and functioning before a full episode of psychosis emerges. This phase usually occurs from a few months to 1-2 years before an initial psychotic break. In some cases, this phase may be absent and in others it could be prolonged. In this phase, two of the most common complaints concern changes in social and occupational interaction. In some cases, an individual may become withdrawn and isolated. Changes in functioning at school or work are also common. This phase can be difficult to detect, but early detection can delay the onset of psychotic symptoms. Some research suggests that early detection may even allow medical healthcare professionals to stop the onset of psychotic symptoms with the use of certain pharmacological treatments. Common symptoms may also include:

- Attenuated positive symptoms: distorted perceptions, strange thoughts, subtle communication difficulty
- Brief intermittent psychotic symptoms: subtle paranoia and hallucination, occur for a short period of times
- Some subtle functional decline in school or work and odd behavior



Arrow points: 1 = patient first notices some change in self, 2 = family or friends first notice some change in patient, 3 = patient first notices psychotic symptoms in self, 4 = family or friends first notice psychotic symptoms in patient, 5 = first psychotic intervention. See text for amplification.

Yung & McGorry Schizophrenia Bulletin 1996

First Episode Psychosis

Common symptoms of first episode psychosis include hallucinations which are sensory perceptions that occur in the absence of any actual stimulus. Auditory hallucinations are particularly common. Other symptoms may include holding false beliefs, whether they are persecutory or grandiose in nature. Individuals may also experience delusions of reference, disorganized thinking or behavior, and a lack of motivation and interest to do things that the individual had previously enjoyed.

Impact of the First Episode

The first psychotic episode is typically a very traumatic event for an individual. It is often confusing, and the experience may be difficult for family members and loved ones to understand. A first psychotic episode may cause a disruption in work and school schedules, and social relationships may also be impacted if the individual becomes withdrawn or reclusive. Rapid referral and early, comprehensive treatment provides the best help for patients and their families.

Research: Current Directions

Currently, many clinical trials are being funded to research how the onset of psychosis may be prevented in at-risk individuals. Therapeutic interventions as well as medication and dietary supplement intervention studies are being conducted in research centers around the country, including at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center (MPRC), where the FEC operates.

Clinical trials that aim to improve outcomes after the onset of first episode psychosis are also under way at various research centers.

Referrals

Please contact Beth Steger, LCSW-C if you would like to make a referral or set up an initial evaluation appointment.

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