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Home Illnesses and conditions Mental health Psychosis Psychosis is a mental health problem that causes people to perceive or interpret things differently from those around them. This might involve hallucinations or delusions. The two main symptoms of psychosis are: The combination of hallucinations and delusional thinking can often severely disrupt perception, thinking, emotion, and behaviour. Experiencing the symptoms of psychosis is often referred to as having a psychotic episode. Psychosis isn’t a condition in itself – it’s triggered by other conditions. It’s sometimes possible to identify the cause of psychosis as a specific mental health condition, such as: Psychosis can also be triggered by traumatic experiences, stress, or physical conditions, such as Parkinson’s disease, a brain tumour, or as a result of drug misuse or alcohol misuse. How often a psychotic episode occurs and how long it lasts can depend on the underlying cause. For example, schizophrenia can be long term, but most people can make a good recovery and about a quarter only have a single psychotic episode. Episodes related to bipolar disorder usually resolve, but may recur. Read more about the causes of psychosis. You should see your GP immediately if you’re experiencing psychotic episodes. It’s important psychosis is treated as soon as possible as early treatment usually has better long-term outcomes. Your GP will look at your symptoms and rule out short-term causes, such as drug misuse. They may ask you some questions to help determine what’s causing your psychosis. For example, they may ask you: Your GP should refer you to a mental health specialist for further assessment and treatment. Read more about diagnosing psychosis. Treatment for psychosis involves using a combination of: Most people with psychosis who get better with medication need to continue taking it for at least a year. Some people need to take medication long term to prevent symptoms recurring. If a person’s psychotic episodes are severe, they may need to be admitted to a psychiatric hospital. Read more about the treatment of psychosis. People with psychosis often have a lack of insight. They’re unaware that they’re thinking and acting strangely. Because of their lack of insight, it’s often down to the friends, relatives, or carers of a person affected by psychosis to seek help for them. If you’re concerned about someone you know and think they may have psychosis, you could contact their social worker or community mental health nurse if they’ve previously been diagnosed with a mental health condition. If you think the person’s symptoms are placing them at possible risk of harm, you can: People with a history of psychosis are much more likely to have drug or alcohol misuse problems, or both. This may be because these substances can provide short-term symptom relief, although they usually make symptoms worse in the long term.