Psychosis: Getting well, staying well and preventing relapse

Information for young people
The early signs

You and your family will probably be familiar with some of the signs and symptoms of psychosis, including:

• having problems with thinking and linking thoughts together
• hearing things other people cannot hear (eg hearing voices or sounds)
• feeling like events have a special meaning for you
• thinking that 'something is going on' or that you are being persecuted
• having strong beliefs that others do not share
• feeling under control of an external force
• feeling that your thoughts are broadcast out loud or being interfered with.

But before you have the 'full blown' symptoms of psychosis you may notice small changes in the way you feel, behave or think.

You may feel:
• slightly more suspicious
• anxious or worried
• irritable, grumpy or angry
• depressed, sad or low.

You may have:
• mood swings
• appetite changes
• difficulty concentrating or remembering
• loss of energy or motivation
• sleep disturbances
• thoughts that are speeded up or slowed down
• a sense that things around you seem changed or different somehow.

You may begin to think:

• "I can't control the way I'm thinking"
• "If I tell someone, I'll go back to hospital"
• "This isn't me, someone else is making all this happen".

Family and friends may notice:

• a change in your behaviour
• you are becoming withdrawn
• you are not interested in socialising
• you are less active or much more active than usual
• your work or study suffers
• you are focused on unusual interests or concerns.

These changes are early warning signs and may indicate that you are about to experience another psychotic episode.

If they're noticed and acted on in good time it is possible to prevent this happening.

The longer these early symptoms are left unmanaged the greater the disruption to your life, and there is a chance of further periods of illness.
If your symptoms start to return, it's not the end of the world - recognising your pattern of relapse and having a clear action plan can prevent the symptoms getting worse.

Although you and your family might want to forget what has happened and 'move on', staying well depends on you being aware of your particular warning signs and situations that might be triggers for you.

Spotting these early signs and dealing with them quickly can result in a more rapid and complete recovery, and give you greater control over your future.

**How can I recognise when I am becoming unwell?**

Involving others:

It can be quite difficult to notice our own behaviour changing. Often it's people around us who notice something is different or 'not quite right'.

Your family, friends, work colleagues, doctor or care coordinator may notice changes first and can help you deal with the early warning signs.

Knowing your early signs:

Your care coordinator will work with you and your family to identify your early warning signs.

They will ask you to describe how your early signs built up over time and what happened when you became unwell.
This may involve drawing a line, using a card sort exercise, writing a story about your last episode, or reviewing your hospital notes.

Together you will then make a personal action plan to help prevent relapse.

This is called a relapse prevention plan. It will include a description of your early signs, details of who to contact and reminders of what to do (we have example sheets of the plan available if you would like to look at them).

The plan will be specific to you and include a range of different ways of coping - practical, psychological or medical.

**Using your relapse prevention plan**

Self monitoring:
Use your plan to regularly review how you are getting on. It's most helpful if your trusted relatives and friends are involved and have copies of your plan, so they can help you stay well.

Practising:
It is important that you, your family and your care coordinator practice using your plan regularly. This will help keep the plan in mind and make it easier to get help at the time when it's most needed.

Keeping it handy:
It's important to keep your plan somewhere handy. Some people keep it on the fridge or in their wallet.
Review
As your coping skills and confidence develop over time you may want to add to or change parts of your relapse prevention plan.

Questions

If you or your relatives or carers have any questions then please speak with your care coordinator, doctor or nurse who will be able to help.
Options available
If you’d like a large print, audio, Braille or a translated version of this leaflet then please ask us.

Useful contact details
SLaM Switchboard: 020 3228 6000
SLaM 24hr Information Line - Advice on how to access SLaM Services: 0800 731 2864
Contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) for help, advice and information:

T: 0800 731 2864
W: www.pals.slam.nhs.uk
E: pals@slam.nhs.uk

Complaints
If you are not happy about something but not sure if you want to make a formal complaint you can speak to a member of staff directly. Alternatively you can contact the PALS Office on freephone 0800 731 2864. If you decide you want to make a formal complaint this can be done by contacting the Complaints Department:

Complaints Department, Maudsley Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 8AZ
T: (020) 3228 2444/2499
E: complaints@slam.nhs.uk
W: www.slam.nhs.uk

www.tfl.gov.uk/journeyplanner
For the quickest way to plan your journey anywhere in greater London use journey planner:

020 7222 1234 (24hrs)