What is psychosis?
A psychosis happens when you have experiences that are so unusual and intense that they interfere with your life.

These include:

- finding it hard to think clearly - your thoughts may also be too fast or too slow
- hearing sounds, voices when there is nobody or nothing there to account for them
- unusual thoughts or beliefs that others may not share or understand, for example you may think that someone is trying to harm you in some way, or believe that chance events are connected to you.

Many of us have an occasional experience like this. They don't affect us and we don't find them a problem. In a psychosis the experiences are so intense that they dominate your life. They make it hard to get on with other people and to deal with day to day tasks.

When a psychosis starts for the first time, you may notice that:

- you have a sense that something is going on, without being sure exactly what
- you can't sleep
- you feel anxious or tense
- you have headaches and feel restless
- you find it hard to spend time with other people, especially family.
What causes psychosis?

We don't know exactly how a psychosis starts or why, in some people, it carries on. It may have something to do with one or more of the chemical systems in the brain being overactive, which is why some medications can help reduce the symptoms.

A psychosis is best seen as something that can be "set off" in a number of different ways.

How long does it last?

A psychosis can last a few hours, days, months or often years. Unless there is a simple physical cause, such as a thyroid problem, it will usually come back if the treatment is stopped.

It looks as though some of us seem to be born with a tendency to develop a psychosis. It can certainly run in some families, but it often needs something to trigger it.

Such triggers include:

- stress
- drug use
- upsetting life events
- physical illness
- head injury
- sleep deprivation.

Each of us probably has a different set of triggers, depending on our make-up.
How common is psychosis?

A psychosis can start at any age, but it most often starts in a person's late teens or early twenties. It affects men and women equally and will affect about 1 in 100 people during their lifetime.

What can be done?

There are many ways to help your recovery. Treatments should be a combination of practical help, talking treatments and medication.

Treatments include:
• medication
• talking therapies
• learning about psychosis
• support groups - both for people with a psychosis and their carers
• help with getting back to (or into) education or work
• family meetings with a nurse or social worker.
If you or your relatives have any questions, ask your care co-ordinator, doctor or a nurse who you see regularly.

More information

Understanding Psychosis
www.rcpsych.ac.uk/info

Mind - Mental Health
www.mind.org.uk

Psychotic Illness young people
www.rcpsych.ac.uk/../
psychoticillnessyoungpeople.aspx
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)