



What Can You Do About Psychosis?

Health professionals will work with you to treat the psychosis. You may have just one health professional, or you may have a whole team of professionals working with you. The *number* of professionals you have working with you doesn't matter. What does matter is that you are getting good treatment.

Good treatment = medication + support + skills

When you have all three parts of this treatment formula then your chances of getting better and staying healthy improve greatly.

Medication

There are many different kinds of medication available to treat psychosis. These medications are called **antipsychotic medication**. It's not important that you know about all of them. **It is important that you know what specific medication(s) you are taking.**

Antipsychotic medication is essential in the treatment of psychosis. The medication does two important things:

1. Gets rid of many of the symptoms of psychosis.
2. Helps to prevent psychosis from occurring again.

In addition to antipsychotic medication, people who have experienced psychosis may sometimes be prescribed other medications. This depends on the symptoms they have experienced. For example, *antidepressant* or *mood stabilizing* medication might be used for problems with mood. Whenever you are prescribed a medication, be sure to find out:

- How much you need to take.
- What symptoms the medication is meant to help.
- What side effects the medication might cause.



Your Turn!

Your Turn!

Write down information about the medication you are taking.

- It's best to complete this activity with the health professional who is prescribing your medication.
- Update this table whenever there is any change to the type or dose of your medications.

MY MEDICATIONS

NAME OF MEDICATION	PROBLEMS THIS MEDICATION WILL HELP WITH	DOSE AND TIMES TO TAKE THIS MEDICATION
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Write Down





Understanding

Medication side effects

Medication can cause *side effects*. Side effects are unwanted effects of the medication.

Some common side effects of antipsychotic medication include:

- Feeling tired
- Weight gain
- Unwanted movements

The side effects are different for each different medication. The side effects also vary from person to person. One person may gain weight from a medication while another person taking the same medication may not.

It's important that you know the possible side effects for the medications you are taking.



Your Turn!

Your Turn!

Write down information about the side effects of the medication you are taking.

- It's best to complete this activity with the health professional who is prescribing your medication.
- Ask your health professional what are the mild and more common side effects for each medication. Also, find out if there are any other, more serious side effects that you should watch out for. **Always discuss any side effects from a medication with your health professional.** You should report any side effects, even if your health professional has not mentioned them.



Write Down

MY MEDICATIONS – POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS

NAME OF MEDICATION	POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS	MY SIDE EFFECTS
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<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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Understanding

More About Medication

Although antipsychotic medications are helpful in treating psychosis, too often people stop taking them.

There are four common reasons why people stop taking medication:

1. Side effects
2. Feeling better
3. Forgetting
4. Stigma



Understanding

1. Side Effects

Sometimes people stop taking their medication due to side effects. There are ways to decrease the side effects while continuing to take your medication.

Sometimes this involves **medication changes** such as: lowering the dose, changing the time of day the medication is taken, or switching to another medication.

Other times this may involve **changes to your behaviour**. For example, if you have a dry mouth you could drink more water or chew gum. If you gain weight, you could modify your diet and exercise more.

It is important to discuss any side effects with your health professional. He or she can help you find ways of dealing with your side effects.

2. Feeling Better

People might also consider stopping their medication because they feel better. While it's great that you are feeling so much better, you should not stop taking your medication without consulting your health professional.

Remember that antipsychotic medication helps prevent the psychosis from coming back. It is recommended that you continue taking antipsychotic medication even after most of the symptoms of psychosis are gone. This may mean for another few months, or sometimes for many years.

3. Forgetting

Sometimes people simply forget to take their medication. Always keeping your medication in the **same place next to something you use every day** might help. For example, keeping your medication right next to your toothbrush, or using a pillbox divided by the days of the week can be effective reminders.

4. Stigma

Taking the medication is a reminder that you have experienced psychosis. Many people feel depressed or ashamed that they have had psychosis. They may stop taking the medication as a way to convince themselves that everything is normal again. If you want to decrease or go off your medications, discuss it with your doctor.





Your Turn!

Your Turn!

In the first column write down the ways your medication has helped you.

In the second column write down the things that you don't like about your medication.

**HOW TAKING MEDICATION
HAS HELPED ME**

**THINGS I DON'T LIKE
ABOUT MY MEDICATION**



Write Down

After you've completed the activity, talk to your health professional, especially about anything you don't like about your medication(s). He or she may be able to help with your concerns.



Understanding

Skills

Learning new skills to lower your level of stress and help you cope with symptoms can help you manage psychosis.

In the following sections you will learn about these important skills:

- Taking Care of Your Health (page 21)
- Managing Stress (page 27)
- Solving Problems (page 31)
- Setting Goals and Moving Forward (page 41)
- Understanding Cognition (page 49)
- Connecting With Other People (page 59)
- Preventing Relapse (page 65)
- Dealing With Symptoms (page 74)

Work on these skills one at a time. You might not complete an entire section in one session, or even in one day.

Remember that you don't have to learn all these skills on your own. Your Support Person, whether a health professional, family member or close friend, is there to help you.

Support

An important part of your treatment is feeling that you are being supported in your recovery.

People who can support you may include your:

- Health professional
- Family
- Friends

Involving your family in appointments with your health professional can help increase the support you feel from them. It also helps your family understand what you are going through.

Some people with psychosis find that they have become isolated, feel lonely and don't have enough connections with people. They are unable to get the support they need. If this has happened to you, then you should check out the section on *Connecting With Other People* in this toolkit.

