

Psychotic Disorders

Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is much less common than anxiety and depressive disorders. It is sometimes wrongly referred to as “split personality”, which leads to confusion with multiple personality disorder.

Schizophrenia is thought to be caused by imbalances in brain chemistry, which result in disturbances in thinking, emotions and behaviour. The first onset of symptoms is typically when the person is in their teens or twenties. Episodes may be acute, short lived or chronic.

The symptoms will vary with each individual in nature and severity. They may include:

- Irrational thoughts and beliefs
- Hallucinations: these can involve vision, hearing, smell, touch and taste. The most common involve hearing voices but they can also include seeing things that are not there, feeling insects crawling under or on the skin, or being able to smell something that other people cannot.
- Delusions: some delusions appear to bear little or no relation to reality, such as someone suddenly believing they are closely related to the Queen. Others may derive from some preceding experience, for example someone who has been in trouble with the police who begins to believe that there are hidden tape recorders that are triggered to come on when ever they enter a certain room gathering evidence against them.
- Disturbances/distortions to any of the senses such as hypersensitivity to some sounds, smells and visual stimuli or sensory information not being interpreted correctly, for example, perceiving a car backfiring to be a gunshot
- Inappropriate behaviour or emotions
- Unpredictable mood – either flattened emotion or heightened sensitivity
- Social withdrawal.