

Drug Induced Paranoia and Psychosis



What is it?

Drug induced Paranoia and Psychosis is when someone has trouble distinguishing between reality and delusions. Delusions are judgements or thoughts not based on reality but 100% believed by the person experiencing them. Because these delusions seem so real to the individual but clearly false to the people around them, it creates distrust and paranoia.

What causes it?

Drug induced paranoia and psychosis is caused by singular or combined use of amphetamines, alcohol, hallucinogens, cocaine, marijuana, heroine/opioids, and/or inhalants.

It can occur during active use or acute withdrawal of substances.



What does it look like?

Typically drug induced psychosis and paranoia looks the same no matter what drug was used, however it can sometimes be difficult to identify. Although it can be as apparent as the person thinking they are being followed or watched by organizations/individuals (FBI/CIA, neighbors), they think there is a hit out on them, or they have been tasked as a messenger and need to deliver an important message, it is important to note that not all psychosis and paranoia are as identifiable. This can be due to their subtleties in nature or the person experiencing them is trying to hide or minimize their symptoms. Here are some signs and symptoms that someone may be experiencing, or on the verge of experiencing psychosis or paranoia...

- Difficulties concentrating or thinking clearly
- Down or depressed mood
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Anxiety
- Suspiciousness or paranoia
- Withdrawal or isolation from family and friends
- Delusions
- Hallucinations (hear/see/taste/smell/feel things that are not there)
- Erratic or disorganized speech (jumps from topic to topic)
- Thoughts of self harm or suicide
- Poor hygiene





What can you do?

Often times when people are experiencing psychosis they become unpredictable as their thoughts and behaviours are erratic and irrational. If you suspect that someone is experiencing paranoia or psychosis...

- do NOT deny or confirm their reality, this can agitate the person, and cause more distrust and paranoia
- Listen to what they are experiencing
- Use empathy statements... "That must be scary for you"
- Focus on what they are feeling NOT the details of the delusions
- Connect them with their psychiatrist or Mental Health Team
- Get them to an emergency room if their symptoms become more severe or disruptive, and/or they are a danger to themselves or others



Emergency rooms have an on call psychiatrist that can assess the individual and get them started on the treatment they need. From there, referrals and connections to a mental health team should be put in place for follow up and continued care.

Treatment is different for everyone, and depends on symptoms, substances used, length of use, how the person is when they are sober, underlying mental health diagnoses, etc...

How long does it last?

As mentioned before, drug induced psychosis can be triggered by active use (a bad trip) or acute withdrawal, so there is no set time on how long psychosis can last. It can last as little as a few hours while the drug is still in the body, or it can last days, weeks, months, years or even become permanent, long after the drug has left their system.



With proper treatment and continued care, symptoms can diminished, and individuals can even enter into a phase of remission.

If you are unsure if someone you know is experiencing paranoia or psychosis please contact the health line at 8-1-1 or contact your Community Health Nurse or Mental Health Therapist

Community Health Clinic
306-XXX-XXXX

Community Health Nurse
Name
306-XXX-XXXX

Community Mental
Health Therapist
Name
306-XXX-XXXX

