

Early Intervention in Psychosis

Early intervention in psychosis improves long-term recovery outcomes and reduces disability.

Psychosis is characterized by hallucinations, delusions, and disorganized thinking, and most commonly emerges in late adolescence and early adulthood.¹ First-episode psychosis may arise from substance/medication-induced psychotic disorder or from primary psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia-spectrum illnesses. At initial presentation, the distinction is often uncertain, and both groups benefit from rapid access to coordinated early-intervention services. The duration of untreated psychosis refers to the time between symptom onset and initiation of adequate treatment. A substantial body of research demonstrates that longer duration of untreated psychosis is associated with worse clinical and functional outcomes such as employment and schooling.²

Early intervention services provide structured, team-based treatment during the first episode of psychosis. Coordinated specialty care models typically include

medication management, cognitive behavioural therapy for psychosis, family education and support, case management and supported employment or education.³ The National Institute of Mental Health RAISE Early Treatment Program randomized trial demonstrated that individuals receiving coordinated specialty care showed significantly greater improvements in quality of life, symptoms, and participation in work or school compared with standard community treatment.⁴ Benefits were strongest when treatment was initiated earlier after symptom onset.

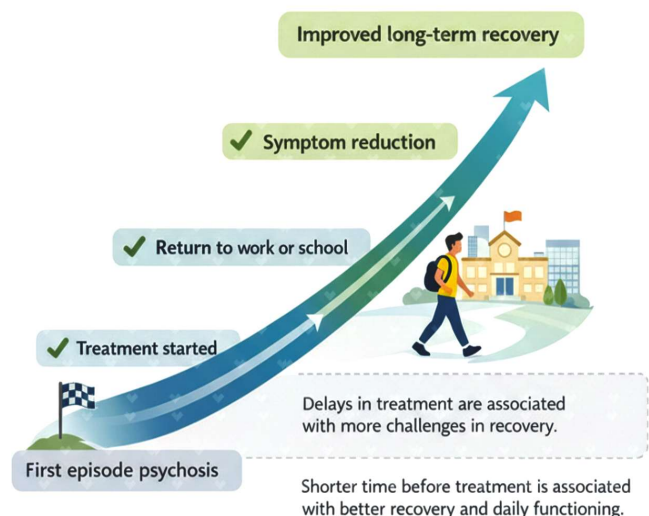
If you are in Alberta and are experiencing symptoms of psychosis or are concerned about someone who may be, you can get meaningful help today by calling 1-877-303-2642 or 2-1-1 Alberta.^{a,b}

^a Alberta Health Services Mental Health Help Line: 1-877-303-2642
^b 211 Alberta: Dial 2-1-1 or visit <https://ab.211.ca>

TABLE 1. Core Components of Early Intervention in Psychosis

	Medication Management Medication to reduce symptoms and prevent relapse
	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Therapy to improve coping and manage distress
	Family Education & Support Education and support for families
	Case Management Coordinated care and relapse prevention
	Supported Employment & Education Help returning to or maintaining work and school participation

FIGURE 2. Early Treatment Supports Recovery



References:

- <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/schizophrenia>
- <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15501912/>
- <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27600538/>
- <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25607303/>