

# First Episode Psychosis (FEP)



## What is First Episode Psychosis and Early Serious Mental Illness?

Psychosis temporarily interferes with the brain's ability to make out reality and causes disruptions in thoughts and perceptions. Everyone's experience with psychosis is different, and psychosis often comes and goes in episodes. Psychosis affects about 3 in 100 people during their lives and is often frightening, confusing, and distressing for the person experiencing it and difficult for family members to understand.

Risk factors that may contribute to psychosis include stressors such as physical illness, substance use, and psychological or physical trauma. The development of psychosis is still being understood and explored, though it is thought to be triggered by a mix of genetics

(family history) and life stressors during critical stages of brain development.

Individuals who experience a first onset of serious mental illness, which can include a first episode of psychosis, may experience symptoms that include:

- Suspiciousness or extreme uneasiness with others
- Hearing, seeing, tasting or believing things that others don't
- Persistent, unusual thoughts or beliefs
- Strong and inappropriate emotions or no emotions at all
- Withdrawing from family or friends
- A sudden decline in self-care
- Trouble thinking clearly or concentrating

## Treatment

Early detection and early action upon experiencing warning signs or symptoms is critical. The most effective treatment for early psychosis is Coordinated Specialty Care (CSC). CSC uses a team-based approach with shared decision-making that focuses on working with individuals to reach their recovery goals.

### Coordinated specialty care programs include the following key areas:

<b>Case Management</b>	Working with the individual to develop problem solving skills, manage medication and coordinate services
<b>Family Support and Education</b>	Giving families information and skills to support their loved one's treatment and recovery
<b>Psychotherapy</b>	Learning to focus on resiliency, managing the condition, promoting wellness, and developing coping skills. Cognitive behavioral therapy is an evidenced-based intervention for psychosis.
<b>Medication Management and Primary Care</b>	Communication about the importance of medication and long-term value even after symptom improvements and coordination with primary and medical healthcare providers
<b>Supported Employment and Education</b>	Fostering autonomy and setting goals, including returning to school or work, developing new interests and hobbies
<b>Peer Support</b>	Connecting with others who have been through similar experiences, support groups, meeting new people, and making new friends

*See reverse side for resources* →



## Find Coordinated Specialty Care

There are four Community Mental Health Centers that provide CSC for First Episode Psychosis through the HOPE program in New Hampshire.

- Nashua – Greater Nashua Mental Health: <https://gnmhc.org/>
- Portsmouth – Seacoast Mental Health Center: <https://smhc-nh.org/>
- Derry – Center for Life Management: <https://centerforlifemanagement.org/>
- Keene – Monadnock Family Services: <https://www.mfs.org/>

The HOPE treatment model via the Department of Health & Human Services is for individuals, aged 15 to 35 years, who are showing symptoms of serious mental illness. To learn more about the HOPE model, visit: <https://childrensbehavioralhealthresources.nh.gov/families-youth/treatments-supports/helping-overcome-psychosis-early-hope>



## Download the NAMI First Episode Psychosis Tip Sheet

For a printable PDF, download the tip sheet: <https://www.namih.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Tipsheet-What-is-Early-and-First-Episode-Psychosis.pdf>



## Learn More and Find Support

- The National Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) offers a national database to locate FEP/CSC treatment providers: <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/locators/esmi>
- The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) NH offers additional resources, education, and support: <https://www.namih.org/fep-esmi/>