



Your health: How can family and friends help with someone who is experiencing a psychotic episode and using street drugs?



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This handout is for family and friends of someone who is experiencing psychosis and using cannabis or other mind-altering drugs. If the problem is one of drug use only, referral to a [drug and alcohol service](#) would be more appropriate, though these strategies would still be useful. People who may have psychosis need referral to and assessment by a [mental health service](#). This fact sheet comes from Northern Sydney Health Mental Health Services, Information for families.

- Talk to the person you are worried about. Find a time when he or she is not 'stoned' and you're both reasonably calm.
- Talk about the problems the drug taking is causing.
- Listen and find out how the drug taking is helpful.
- Avoid getting into arguments, which will make it more difficult to talk openly in the future. It is best not to sound as though you are 'nagging' or 'accusing'.
- Make clear what behaviour you will not accept.
- Make clear what will happen if the drug taking continues, keeping in mind the person's reasons for using. Do not make idle threats.
- Be consistent. Don't keep changing your mind, or say one thing and do another. All members of the family need to be consistent.

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- Help the person to be realistic. Promises like “I’ll never take drugs again” are difficult to keep.
- Don’t make it easy for the person to take drugs. For example, don’t give them drugs or money to obtain drugs.
- Don’t hide the effects of drug taking. For example, don’t phone the person’s workplace with excuses, clear up a mess or miss some social event for fear of embarrassment.
- Encourage the person to focus on the effects that drug taking is having rather than use a label such as ‘pot head’ or ‘druggo’.

Note

This fact sheet comes from Northern Sydney Health Mental Health Services, Information for families. It was written by Barbara Liffiton, Clinical Nurse Specialist at Brookvale Early Intervention Centre.



Links

We have more information on **Adult Mental Health** and the **Early Psychosis Intervention Service**.

We have fact sheets on a number of mental health topics: **'Someone in my family has psychosis': Information for young people (primary school age)**, **'Someone in my family has psychosis: information for young people (high school age)**, **'What is psychosis?'**, **The Mental Health Act**,...

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