

# Psychosis

The word “psychosis” is used to describe a situation where a child loses touch with reality. Psychosis is very rare in children. It is normal for children to go through a stage where they cannot tell the difference between what is real and what is pretend. However, after this stage of development, if they continue to see and hear things that do not exist, they may have a mental health issue.

The following is a list of typical signs and symptoms of psychosis. Your child may be experiencing psychosis if he or she has:

- **DELUSIONS:** These are unshakable beliefs that are obviously untrue. For example, a child may strongly believe that there is a plot to harm him or her, that he or she is being spied on through the television or that he or she is being taken over by aliens.
- **THOUGHT DISORDER:** This disorder occurs when a child is not thinking straight, and it is hard to make sense of what he or she is saying. Ideas may be jumbled up but in a way that is more than being muddled or confused.
- **HALLUCINATIONS:** These occur when a child sees or hears something that is not really there. The most common hallucination that children may have is hearing voices. This can be very frightening and can make them believe that they are being watched or picked on. Children who are having these experiences may act strangely. For example, they may talk or laugh to themselves as if talking to somebody that you cannot see.

Possible mental health diagnoses within this symptom cluster include:

- Bipolar Disorder (p59)
- Depression (p67)
- Schizophrenia (p88)
- Substance Abuse and Dependence (p94)

A child with the symptoms listed above could also have a medical condition. Talk to your child’s pediatrician about your child’s symptoms.

