

Paranoid Personality Disorder

What is paranoid personality disorder?

People who have paranoid personality disorder (PPD) do not trust other people. People with this disorder think that everyone is out to get them. They are always afraid that others are trying to cheat, hurt, or fool them.

How does it occur?

This disorder usually starts in childhood or in the teen years. The exact cause of PPD is not known. Experts think it may be caused by differences in the brain or nervous system. It might also be related to problems in the family such as abuse, death of loved ones, or mental illness. The risk is increased if someone in the family has schizophrenia. Men are more likely than women to be diagnosed with PPD.

What are the symptoms?

A person with PPD may:

- think that others are trying to cheat, hurt, or fool them
- worry that friends or family are not loyal
- not talk about things for fear the information will be used against them
- get easily insulted or insult others
- hold grudges
- always think that other people are attacking them
- worry that their significant other is cheating on them
- have a poor self-image
- not have a sense of humor.

How is it diagnosed?

Paranoia is a possible risk of drug use and abuse (for example, alcohol, marijuana, amphetamines, cocaine, and PCP). Your healthcare provider will ask about your substance abuse history, symptoms, relationships, and medical history. Your provider may also:

- give you a personality test
- suggest lab tests to rule out medical problems
- make sure medicines are not causing or increasing your symptoms
- rule out other mental health problems.

How is it treated?

Medicines and therapy may be effective ways to treat the disorder. However, you may not seek treatment because you may be suspicious of the healthcare provider. Without treatment the symptoms will continue.

Medicines may help treat severe anxiety or delusions. Psychotherapy can help you see yourself more clearly. It helps you recognize what causes your behavior and the effects of your behavior on others. This can help you change behaviors that get in the way of living a satisfying life. Cognitive-behavior therapy (CBT) is a way to help you identify and change thoughts you have that are not realistic.

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When should I seek help?

If your symptoms are seriously interfering with your daily life, seek help from your healthcare provider or a mental health professional.

For more information, contact:

The National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI)

800-950-NAMI

Web site: <http://www.nami.org>

The National Mental Health Association (NMHA)

800-969-NMHA

Web site: <http://www.NMHA.org>

Developed by McKesson Corporation

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