

# Recovering from psychosis

+ YOUNG PEOPLE



**Recovery is not just about reducing and eliminating the symptoms of psychosis, but also recovering in other important aspects of a person's life. It's the process of getting well, or of finding a way to live with psychosis that allows a young person to have a fulfilling and meaningful life.**

## How does recovery happen?

Patterns of recovery from psychosis vary from person to person. Some people recover quickly with very little intervention, while others benefit from support over a longer period. Many people will only have one episode of psychosis, while others will have more than one. Some young people will experience ongoing symptoms, and if symptoms remain or return, their recovery process may be prolonged. Effectively managing further episodes of psychosis can involve difficult periods lasting months, or even years. Whatever the recovery pattern is, most young people recover from psychosis and lead satisfying and productive lives.

## What will treatment involve?

### Assessment

The first phase of treatment involves assessment. This means having an interview with a mental health specialist, such as a psychiatrist or mental health clinician. They'll speak with the young person, and with family, friends, and other supports, to gain information and try to understand what's happening for the young person and what kind of support and treatment they need. They often use a blood test and other examinations to ensure there's no underlying physical cause for the symptoms of psychosis.

Assessment can be an overwhelming time for a young person and their family and significant others, but it is important in working out the best treatments and other supports that are needed. All the information the specialist gathers during assessment provides some idea about the kind of psychosis the young person is experiencing and how best to help them.

### Medication

Medication is an important treatment for psychosis. Along with other forms of treatment, it plays a fundamental role in recovery from an episode of psychosis and in prevention of further episodes. There are a number of different types of medication that are very effective in reducing the symptoms of psychosis and the anxiety and distress these symptoms can cause. The treating doctor will help work out the details about how much medication a young person needs to take and when to take it. Medication should be monitored, and if side-effects develop, the kind of medication or the amount taken may need to be changed.

### Counselling and psychological therapy

When a person experiences psychosis for the first time, it can be highly distressing. Having someone to talk to is an important part of treatment. The exact method of counselling or therapy may vary to suit the young person and the phase of their episode of psychosis. A person with acute symptoms of psychosis may simply want to know there's someone who can understand their experience and provide reassurance that they'll recover. As the recovery phase progresses, the young person can learn practical ways to prevent further episodes, such as stress management and recognition of early warning signs.

### Practical and psychosocial assistance

Treatment also involves working with the young person to identify what's important to them in their recovery. This varies from person to person. Recovery can mean returning to school, getting a job, finding accommodation, obtaining financial help, developing new interests, or meeting new people and making new friends. One-to-one counselling, group activities, and activity-based therapies can help a person to achieve these goals.

### Should hospital be considered?

Going to hospital isn't always a part of the treatment for psychosis. Relatives, friends, and significant others can often support a young person experiencing psychosis at home. And in most cases, a mental health professional provides them with skilled and regular support. Treating young people experiencing a first episode of psychosis at home minimises their distress and any disruption to lives. In some places, community-based care by a local mental health service might be available.

Sometimes, though, spending a period of time in hospital during an episode of psychosis before continuing with community-based treatment is beneficial. This is because hospitalisation allows symptoms to be observed and understood more fully. It also allows further assessments to be carried out and helps begin a solid treatment plan. A young person may also request hospitalisation so they can rest and feel safe.

Another reason for hospitalisation might be a 'crisis'. This is when the symptoms of psychosis are placing the young person, or other people, at risk. Hospitalisation allows assessment and treatment to be continued, and ensures that the person is safe. In these situations, an admission to hospital may be against the person's will – at least in the beginning. After recuperating in hospital, the young

person can resume treatment in the community as soon as they're well and safe enough.

## How can the person with psychosis be involved?

Young people experiencing psychosis should be actively involved in their own treatment. While an expert treating team brings treatment, support, and encouragement, a young person can also do a lot to support their own recovery.

It is important that young people learn about psychosis, about the recovery process, and what can be done to support and maintain recovery. This might involve maintaining a healthy lifestyle, seeking support during tougher periods, making an effort to get back into school or work, and taking breaks and being kind to themselves when needed. Young people and their families should know their rights and feel free to ask questions when something isn't clear.

### Further information

For further information regarding mental health, or for information in other languages, visit:

[www.orygen.org.au](http://www.orygen.org.au)  
[www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)  
[www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)  
[www.sane.org](http://www.sane.org)  
[www.healthdirect.gov.au](http://www.healthdirect.gov.au)  
[www.oyh.org.au](http://www.oyh.org.au)

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Getting help early + Young People  
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Psychosis & physical health + Young People  
Getting active + Young People  
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