

**It takes each of us to make a difference for all of us.**

**It's whānau ora, and it is the foundation that inspires every aspect of our work.**

Yellow Brick Road is a national organisation that specialises in providing support for whānau who have a loved one experiencing mental health challenges.

After 40 years of experience working with people around New Zealand, we know that if the family of a loved one experiencing mental distress are correctly supported and empowered, the path they walk leads to increased wellbeing for the whole whānau.

We will walk alongside any family in New Zealand who needs support, knowledge, advocacy and empowerment as their loved one journeys towards mental wellbeing.

If you are supporting a whānau member who is experiencing schizophrenia, we can help you.

**You can access our services nationwide**

Our regional branches in the North and South Island allow us to reach a broad range of communities with our services.

We also provide online services including wellbeing webinars, group support and self-development programmes.

You can also find a range of support materials and resources on our website.

**Contact us to find out more**

Our services are free and confidential. Contact us today to find out more.

**Northern Region**

0800 732 825

**Central North Island**

0800 555 434

**South Island**

0800 876 682

[yellowbrickroad.org.nz](http://yellowbrickroad.org.nz)



Supporting families  
towards mental wellbeing

**Yellow  
Brick  
Road**



**Out of the  
shadows and  
into the sun**

**A guide for whānau of people  
who have schizophrenia**

Receiving a diagnosis of schizophrenia can be overwhelming for the affected person and their whānau, but it can also be a positive step on the journey towards wellbeing.

With the right treatment and support, people with schizophrenia can achieve their goals and lead fulfilling lives.

## 1. What is schizophrenia?

Schizophrenia is a serious mental disorder that affects how the brain works.

It is reported that 1 person in 100 experiences schizophrenia.

## 2. What causes schizophrenia?

It is not yet known what causes schizophrenia but genetics, brain chemistry, substance abuse, stressful life events and trauma (particularly in childhood) can increase your chances of experiencing schizophrenia.

Schizophrenia can run in families and people with a parent or sibling who has schizophrenia have a higher chance of developing the illness. However, most people with a family member who has schizophrenia, don't develop it themselves.

## 3. Who gets schizophrenia?

This illness is seen in numerous countries and cultures. It usually begins during adolescence or early adulthood but can start later in life.

## 4. What are the symptoms of schizophrenia?

Some schizophrenia symptoms are called 'positive' because they are additional experiences that are not usually part of life. Others are called 'negative' symptoms because they involve something missing from daily life.

### Positive symptoms include:

#### Thought disruption

People who have schizophrenia can find it difficult to think clearly, make decisions or plans. Thought disruption may be accompanied by inappropriate emotional responses.

#### Hallucinations

Some people experiencing hallucinations may see, taste, smell or feel things that are not there. They may hear voices that others don't hear. The voices may be familiar, friendly or critical, and they might discuss the hearer's thoughts or behaviours and/or tell them what to do.

Hearing voices does not necessarily mean a diagnosis of schizophrenia. Some research has shown that four per cent of the population hears voices and, for some, these voices are not a problem.

#### Delusions or other hallucinations

These are beliefs or experiences that are not shared by others. For example, someone might believe they are being pursued by secret agents or controlled by external forces that are putting thoughts into their mind.

### Negative symptoms include:

Negative symptoms include having no interest in life, feeling emotionally flat, being unable to concentrate and avoiding people.

## 5. Can schizophrenia be treated?

Schizophrenia is a prolonged but treatable illness. Treatment is often more successful when whānau are actively involved and in partnership with the healthcare team and the unwell person.

## 6. How is schizophrenia treated?

Schizophrenia can be managed with medication, psychological treatment and rehabilitation. Antipsychotics are the main type of medication used in schizophrenia treatment.

**Social rehabilitation** helps the affected person to participate in their community.

**Vocational rehabilitation** can help people with schizophrenia discover activities they find meaningful and enjoyable. This helps them build their confidence and understand their strengths.

The long-term goal of all rehabilitation is to help people with schizophrenia learn how to manage their symptoms, gain confidence in their ability to do so, and live their lives to the full.

