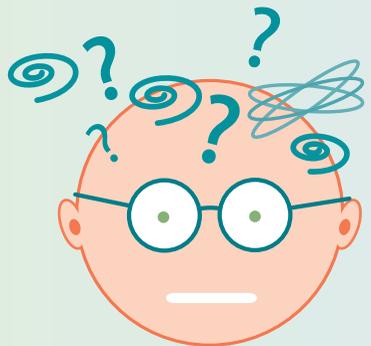


Delirium in the Hospital: How You Can Help



Tips for Families & Friends

What is delirium?

Delirium is a condition that can cause sudden changes in the way a person thinks and behaves.

Usually, delirium is temporary and gets better, but some people may take longer to improve. Delirium may last for hours, days, or even weeks.

In many cases, delirium can be prevented or treated, but some people may have long-term effects and never fully return to normal. This is why it is important to **identify delirium and treat it right away.**



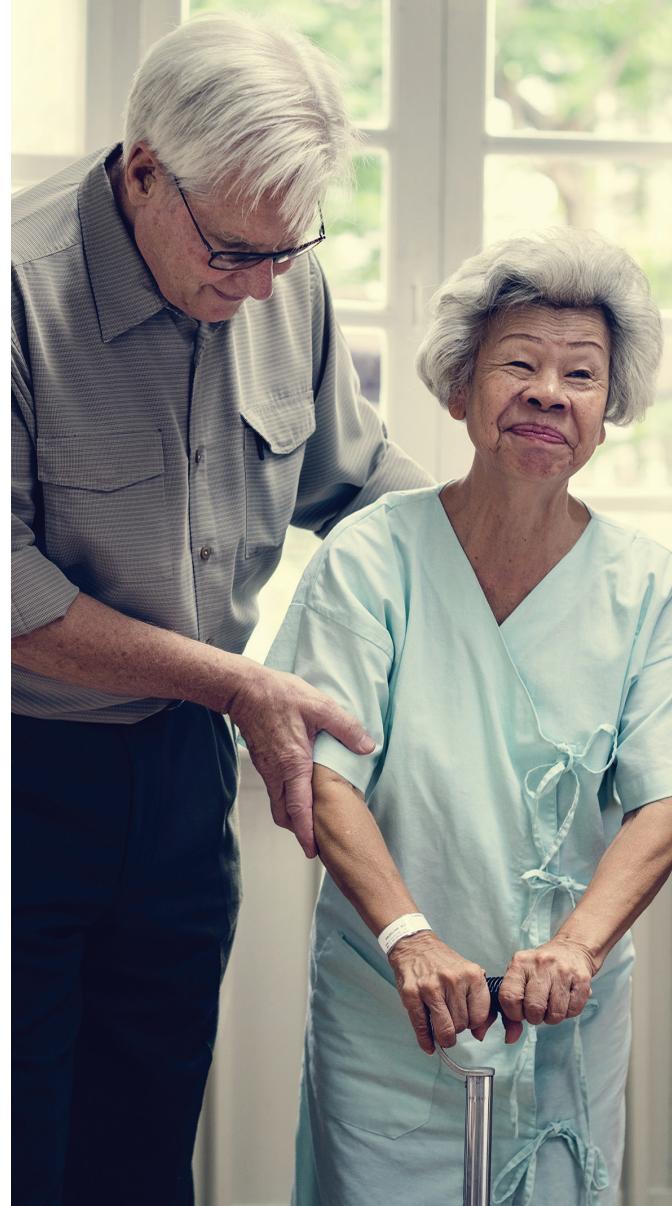
Families and friends are often the first to notice changes that could mean a loved one has delirium.

If you see your loved one is not behaving as usual, tell the health care team right away.

What does delirium look like?

The symptoms of delirium can vary from person to person. Someone with delirium may have the following symptoms:

- ⊙ Have trouble concentrating or paying attention.
- ⊙ Have trouble understanding what is happening around them.
- ⊙ Be sleepy or slow to react.
- ⊙ Have trouble knowing where they are, the date or the people around them.
- ⊙ Say things that don't make sense.
- ⊙ Be forgetful.
- ⊙ Feel restless.
- ⊙ Be aggressive, either physically or verbally.
- ⊙ See or hear things that are not there.
- ⊙ Believe things that are not real.
- ⊙ Change their sleeping habits.



Is delirium the same as dementia?

No. Delirium and dementia (which includes Alzheimer's disease) are different.

Delirium comes on quickly and usually gets better. Dementia develops slowly and cannot be reversed.

What can cause delirium?

Older adults are more at risk of getting delirium, but many other factors can increase a person's risk.

Here are some of the most common risk factors:

Environment

- Being in a place with unfamiliar lights, noises or people.



Personal Health

- Having dementia (such as Alzheimer's disease).
- Pain.
- Having an infection or surgery.
- Not drinking or eating enough.
- Having trouble seeing or hearing.
- Constipation.
- Changes in one's sleep routine.



Medications

- Side effects of some medications.
- Suddenly stopping some medications, alcohol, or drugs.



How you can help your loved one

Supporting a loved one with delirium can be a scary and difficult experience.

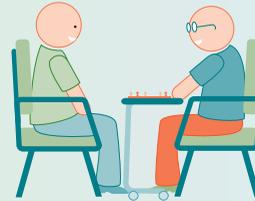
If you need help, let the health care team know.

1 Talk to your loved one

- Talk slowly and clearly, keeping topics simple and familiar.
- Speak in a calm and reassuring tone.
- Talk about current events.
- Talk to them about familiar things, such as other family members or their pet.
- Avoid confronting them or arguing with them.
- Don't take hurtful or strange things your loved one may say to heart.

2 Stimulate and remind them

- Visit often. If your loved one is confused, stay with them as much as possible.
- Use your visits for activities, such as talking, reading out loud, or games.
- Bring in familiar objects from home.
- Gently remind your loved one where they are, the date or the time of the year.

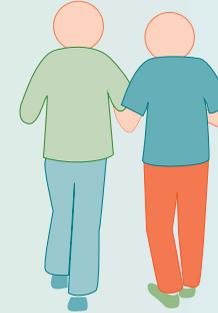


3 Make sure they wear their glasses, hearing aids and dentures



4 Encourage them to keep moving

- Ask the health care team if there are any activities your loved one should avoid.
- Encourage your loved one to move and to do as much as they can **on their own**. This will help them to recover more quickly.
- Encourage them to do exercise 3 times a day, like walking or sitting in a chair at mealtimes.



5 Help your loved one drink and eat enough

- Ask the health care team if there is any food or drink your loved one should avoid.
- Offer liquids to drink often.
- Bring home-cooked meals and snacks.



6 Be aware of pain

- If you think your loved one is in pain, **let the health care team know** so that they can help.



7 Encourage regular sleep

- Encourage them to be active during the day and limit napping.
- At bedtime, help staff limit noise and turn down the lights.
- Bring earplugs for your loved one.

