

# How can I prevent delirium?

You can work with your treating team to help prevent delirium and recognise if you might start experiencing delirium. Here is how you can help:

- Bring in glasses and hearing aids and remember to use them
- Bring personal and familiar items from home (e.g. photos , blankets) and favourite toiletries (toothbrush, hairbrush, etc)
- Stay up to date with current events (e.g. read the newspaper) and engage in games or hobbies (e.g. crosswords, cards or jigsaws)
- Keep your daily routines as much as possible (e.g. open the curtains to let the sun in, watch a favourite TV show)
- Bring in easy-to-wear clothing and comfortable shoes or slippers
- Bring in any walking aids to stay mobile in hospital
- Eat and drink as normally as your condition allows
- Share your interests (e.g. names of your family members or pets, hobbies, significant life events) and usual routines (e.g. when you prefer to have a shower) with your treating team

Tell the treating team if you have pain

## Important things to remember

- Families and caregivers can help the health care team with delirium prevention strategies.
- If you notice any changes or have concerns or questions about delirium, please speak to the health care team immediately.
- Delirium can be a frightening experience. If you or your loved one experiences delirium, talking to a health care provider can help you understand what is happening.
- Talk to your loved one about their delirium experience to lessen their fear or frustration.

## For more information

Speak to the health care team



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OR

<http://www.delirium.org.au>



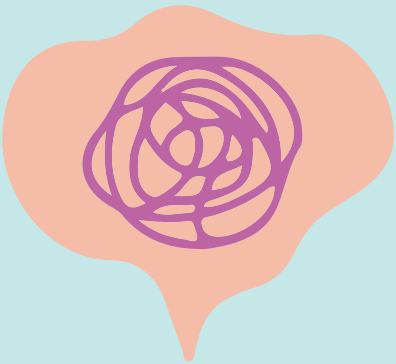
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# COULD I GET DELIRIUM?

Preventing and recognising  
delirium: a guide for patients



## What is delirium?

Delirium is a new state of confusion which causes a person's mind to become clouded and makes it hard for them to pay attention and focus their thoughts.

Delirium develops quickly over hours or days and can last a few days or weeks

Delirium is different from dementia which has a gradual onset and is a lasting condition, but people with dementia are at increased risk of delirium.

Delirium can be very frightening and can lead to slower recovery, longer stays in hospital and additional complications such as falls

## What causes delirium?

Delirium can occur following operations or procedures and with many acute illnesses or medications. Many causes can contribute to delirium and often patients have several causes at once. These include:

- Pain
- Infections (e.g. chest or urine)
- Thirst/dehydration
- Hunger/poor nutrition
- Being less mobile than usual
- Drug side effects
- Drug or alcohol withdrawal
- Too much or too little sensory stimulation (e.g. noise, light)
- Sleep disturbance

## Who is at higher risk?

Delirium can occur in people of any age who have a serious illness or major surgery, but is especially common in people who:

- ◆ Are aged older than 65 years
- ◆ Have existing dementia or other brain disorders e.g. depression
- ◆ Need help with activities like showering, waking or using the toilet
- ◆ Have poor eyesight or hearing
- ◆ Take multiple medicines
- ◆ Have heavy alcohol intake
- ◆ Have experienced delirium before



## Signs of delirium checklist



Delirium can be different for different people. Symptoms can fluctuate throughout the day. This is a checklist of signs to observe.

### People with delirium may:

- Seem different to their normal selves
- Be confused and forgetful
- Be very agitated or sleepy
- Have difficulty paying attention or keeping track of conversations
- Be unsure of the time of day or where they are
- Have changes in their sleeping patterns
- See or hear things that are not there
- Worry that other people are trying to harm them

*If you are worried about yourself or a loved one, talk to a healthcare professional as soon as possible.*