



World Delirium Day – 15 March



What is Delirium?

Delirium is a very rapid decline in brain function. It involves a mix of: reduced ability to concentrate, sleepiness, agitation, hallucinations or altered beliefs. Delirium develops over hours or days.



What Causes Delirium?

Delirium is caused by illness, injuries (like a broken bone after a fall), surgery, or medicines.



Who gets delirium?

Anyone can get delirium. Older age and dementia greatly increase the chance of becoming delirious.



Is delirium the same as dementia?

Delirium is different from dementia. Delirium comes on quickly and usually resolves over days. Dementia develops slowly (months) and mostly cannot be reversed.



If it can be reversed, what is the big deal?

Even a brief course of delirium increases the risk of poor recovery from illness, nursing home placement, and possibly dementia and death. Delirium is stressful for patients with frightening beliefs like thinking they are in prison and in danger. Families and caregivers are distressed by delirium as well.



How common is delirium?

1 out of 4 older hospital patients will get delirium.



How is delirium treated?

Promptly targeting the underlying illnesses or adjusting medications that may have triggered delirium are the most important treatments.



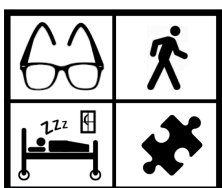
My nurses and doctors know about delirium, right?

Delirium is still undiagnosed in a majority of cases. Unfortunately, not all healthcare professionals know enough about delirium.

What can I do about delirium?

Seeking medical help promptly: delirium can be a sign of acute, serious illness. During delirium, recovery may be helped by:

- Making sure glasses and hearing aids are used
- Getting up and out of bed
- Reassurance, re-orientation, and avoidance of conflict
- Allowing night-time sleep
- Gentle conversation, playing games, doing puzzles.



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