

Delirium

For patients and visitors

FOR MORE INFORMATION, OR IF YOU NOTICE ANY SIGN THAT MIGHT BE SUGGESTIVE OF DELIRIUM, TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR OR HEALTHCARE TEAM. THEY CAN ASSIST WITH PROPER DIAGNOSIS, RESOURCES AND STRATEGIES.

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RUNNYMEDE HEALTHCARE CENTRE

WHAT IS DELIRIUM?

Delirium is a temporary state of confusion that comes on very suddenly. Delirium can change the way people think, behave, and their awareness to the environment. Older adults are most at risk and early detection can help improve health outcomes.

CAUSES OF DELIRIUM

- Infection
- Medication side effects
- Pain
- Recent injuries or falls
- Worsening of a chronic illness
- High or low blood pressure
- Dehydration and/or constipation
- Poor-fitting hearing aids or glasses

HIGH RISK FACTORS

- Dementia (>75)
- On five or more medications
- History of delirium
- Acute/chronic illness
- Recovery from surgery
- Trauma
- Environmental changes
- Nutritional deficiencies
- Dehydration
- Sensory losses

WHEN SHOULD I SEEK ASSISTANCE

Seek help when you notice:

- A sudden change in mental status, behaviour or self-care abilities.
- Difficulty focusing, sustaining or shifting attention
- Disturbance of the sleep-wake cycle, e.g. agitated or restless at night and drowsy during the day
- Disorientation
- Recent memory impairment
- Speech or language disturbances, e.g. rambling speech
- Increased or decreased movement
- Emotional disturbances, e.g. fearfulness, irritability, anger, sadness

TREATMENT OPTIONS

Treatment options are collaborative and patient-centred. Support from family and friends is helpful during the treatment process.

Treatment options include:

- Diagnostic testing of potential causes
- Enhanced emotional well-being
- Maintenance of everyday methods
- Reduced social isolation
- Self-care for chronic medical conditions
- Maintenance for a good quality of life

Positive outcomes of treatment include:

- Speedy recovery
- Improved emotional, social and physical functioning
- Improved quality of life

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

- Know the signs and causes of delirium
- Notify the physician or healthcare team if you notice any signs of delirium
- Support healthy rest and sleep by:
  - Reducing noise and distraction
  - Keeping light low or off when resting
  - Increasing comfort with a pillow, blanket, warm drink or back rub
- Support physical activities
- Support healthy eating and drinking by:
  - Encouraging and assisting with food intake
  - Offering fluids often
- Support hearing by:
  - Encouraging the use of hearing aids
  - Ensuring hearing aids are working properly
- Support vision by:
  - Encouraging the use of glasses or a magnifying glass
  - Keeping glasses clean
  - Using good lighting
- Enhance involvement in care by:
  - Keeping sentences short and simple
  - Establishing daily routines
  - Discussing daily plans of care