



# Understanding delirium (Easy Read)

## What is this leaflet for?

This leaflet tells you about a condition called delirium. It will help you understand:

- what delirium is
- how delirium can happen
- what you can do to help someone with delirium
- and how we help our patients who have delirium

## What is delirium?



When someone has delirium, their brain starts to work in a different way than normal and people usually start to feel confused.

Delirium happens quickly and usually goes away when the cause of it is treated.

## What causes delirium?

Lots of different things can make delirium develop. It isn't usually just one thing.

Some of the things that can make delirium develop are:

- having a wee infection or a chest infection
- having a high temperature
- side-effects of some medicines
- being dehydrated (not drinking enough)
- epilepsy
- not being able to do a poo (being constipated)
- being in a place you don't know

## What does having delirium feel like?

It can be frightening for the person who has delirium. It can also be frightening for the person's friends and family. Delirium is usually worse at night-time.



Delirium can make you:

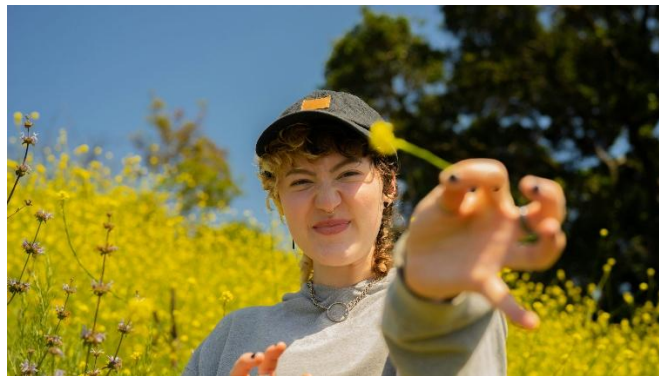
- not know where you are or why you're there
- find it difficult to talk to other people
- feel fidgety and get annoyed easily
- feel sleepy or start to move slowly
- fall asleep in the daytime but wake up at night-time
- feel frightened, worried or depressed
- have realistic dreams that might carry on when you wake up
- worry that people are trying to harm you
- hear noises or voices when there is nothing or nobody there to cause them
- see people or things that aren't there



## How can I help someone with delirium?

You can help someone with delirium feel calmer if you:

- talk calmly and in short sentences
- be patient
- repeat things that you've already said
- listen to the person and reassure them
- bring some things from home that the person likes, like a favourite cushion or blanket
- talk about things you know the person likes – that could be their favourite song, their favourite flowers or food



## How we can treat delirium

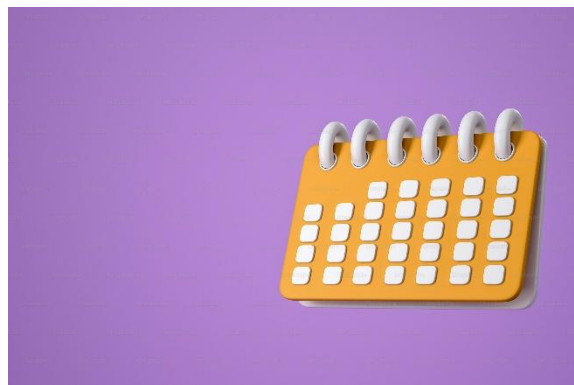
We will carry out some tests to find out what caused the person to develop delirium. When we know why, we will start the right medicine.



While we are treating the reason for delirium, we might give the person some different medicine to help with their symptoms too. That might mean giving some medicine to help the person to keep calm, or it might mean giving some medicine to stop the person seeing things that aren't really there (hallucinating).

### **How long does it take to get better?**

Delirium gets better when the cause is treated with medicine. The medicine might start to work very quickly, but sometimes it can take a few days or a few weeks for the person to feel better. People who have dementia can take a long time to get over delirium.



### **How do you feel when you are better?**

Sometimes the person who had delirium can remember what happened in a lot of detail. But sometimes the person who had delirium can't remember anything about it at all. Some people remember things that happened like it was a dream. This can make the person who had delirium and their family and friends feel upset or sad, and sometimes it can make people feel frightened.

The best thing to do is talk to the doctors or nurses about your feelings. They can talk to you about what happened each day, and they can talk to you about anything that makes you feel worried or upset. People say that talking about delirium is helpful. Your friends and family can help you talk about it too.



### **Will it happen again?**

If the person who had delirium gets sicker or if they get a new infection, they are more likely to develop delirium again.

### **How can I find out more information about delirium?**

You can go on the internet to find more information, or we can find some information for you. You can ask one of our nurses to help you get some more information.