

Other ways of helping

In order to diagnose delirium, it is helpful for our staff to speak to a person who knows the patient well. Therefore, you may be asked about when the confusion started, whether it was associated with poor concentration and muddled speech, or whether the patient has become more sleepy.

When the patient is medically fit, moving back to a familiar or quieter environment as soon as is safe often helps the confusion improve more quickly.

For this reason, it is also helpful if families are able to work together with hospital and social services staff to ensure the best discharge arrangements can be made for the patient.

For these reasons we ask you:

- To complete forms quickly.
- To attend meetings to discuss care needs with staff.
- To visit care homes and make a choice as soon as possible.

Useful sources of information

Further information can be obtained from:

- the medical team looking after you, your relative or friend, Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.
- a senior member of the ward nursing staff at other times.

Additional information is available on the internet:

Royal College of Psychiatrists
www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/problemsdisorders/delirium.aspx

European Delirium association
www.eurodeliriumassociation.com/silo/files/elm-b-carers-leaflet.jpg

The Trust endeavours to ensure that the information given here is accurate and impartial.

If you require this information in another language, large print, audio (CD or tape) or braille, please email the Patient Information team at patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk

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Delirium

Information for patients and carers

A leaflet explaining what delirium is, what causes the condition and how to help someone with delirium recover



Delirium

Delirium is an acute state of confusion. It happens to 20 to 30% of older patients in hospital. It is a temporary condition and not the same as dementia which is a permanent disorder.

Causes include:

- Infection
- Side effects of medication
- Stroke
- Dehydration
- Changes in the balance of glucose, salts or breakdown products in the blood
- Low levels of oxygen
- Sudden stopping of certain drugs or alcohol
- Epilepsy



Being in hospital

Delirium is usually a complication of a medical condition, but being in hospital can increase the risk of delirium developing or can make it worse.

Hospital is a very busy place with lots of activity and noise. It is sometimes difficult for an older person to take everything in. It is very easy to lose track of what time or day it is. Some patients may not realise that they are in Boston if they have become ill somewhere else and taken here by ambulance.



What you can do to help

- Regular contact with familiar people helps enormously.
- Bring in familiar objects from home to calm, orientate and reassure.
- Give gentle reminders every time you visit, of what day and date it is, where they are and what is going on in the world outside. Our staff are asked to do the same.
- Talk slowly and clearly about familiar subjects.
- Avoid long visits, loud chatter and laughter and lots of visitors at one time.
- Bring in personal clothes, hearing aids and glasses.
- Encourage eating and drinking by bringing in favourite snacks or drinks.

For some patients, we actively encourage carers to be present at meal times if there are problems with feeding.

