

Your relative's medical history

- Dementia
- Depression
- Previous delirium
- New illness

Please remember to tell us if you are at all concerned about your relative.

If you have any queries, concerns or problems, please talk to the nurse in charge or the consultant's managing your relative's care.

How do I make a comment about my treatment?

We aim to provide the best possible service however, if your experience of our services does not meet your expectations and you would like to speak to someone other than staff caring for you, please contact the patient advice and liaison service (PALS) on **020 3313 0088** for Charing Cross, Hammersmith, and Queen Charlotte's and Chelsea Hospitals or **020 3312 7777** for St Mary's and Western Eye Hospitals. You can also email PALS at pals@imperial.nhs.uk. The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and are often able to solve problems on behalf of patients.

Alternatively, you may wish to express your concerns in writing to:

Chief Executive
Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust
Trust Headquarters
The Bays, South Wharf Road
London W2 1NY

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print, as a sound recording, in Braille, or in alternative languages. Please contact the communications team on **020 3312 5592**.

Emergency medicine and elderly care
Published: July 2014
Review date: July 2017
Reference no: 456v2
© Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust

Understanding delirium

Information for relatives and carers

What is delirium?

Delirium is **not** dementia.

Delirium is a sudden onset of mental confusion causing changes in behaviour. Older people are at greater risk.

Recognising and reporting symptoms early can save lives, as **delirium is a medical emergency**.

What can cause delirium?

- An infection
- Pain
- Recent surgery
- Illness
- Dehydration
- Constipation
- Being admitted to hospital
- Grief or stress over the loss of a loved one

What are the symptoms?

- Being more forgetful than normal
- Not knowing where they are
- Being restless and upset for no apparent reason
- Appearing to be less or more alert than usual
- Not recognising family and friends
- Talking but not making much sense
- Having trouble concentrating
- Not knowing whether it is day or night

-
- Seeing or hearing imaginary things
 - Slurred speech
 - Having difficulty staying awake

How is it treated?

First, we need to find out what has caused the delirium. We will usually need to do more tests and ask more questions.

Once we know what caused the delirium, we will discuss the treatment plan with you.

What can I do to help?

Please tell us if you suspect anything – sometimes delirium can go unnoticed.

Try to spend as much time as you can with your loved one. It can be hard when they are confused, but evidence shows that it does help.

Make sure that your relative keeps wearing their glasses or hearing aid if normally used.

Encourage your loved one to move around and walk if possible.

Try to avoid lots of noise and distractions.

Mental stimulation will help, so try to keep your relative interested in things like reading and current affairs.

Encourage family and friends to visit as much as possible.

Make sure your relative knows what time of day it is.

Bring in favourite and familiar objects, especially photographs.

If you suspect that your relative is suffering from delirium, please complete the following checklist and tell a member of staff.

How is your relative today?

Please tick the box next to each statement that describes your relative:

- Is more forgetful than normal
- Does not know where he/she is
- Is restless and upset for no apparent reason
- Is less or more alert than normal
- Does not recognise family or friends
- Is talking but not making much sense
- Is having trouble concentrating
- Does not know whether it is day or night
- Is seeing or hearing imaginary things