

# Delirium Action Plan

Delirium is a sudden inability to think clearly and pay attention. It is common among older people. Delirium can be a sign of a serious underlying medical problem. It may be mistaken for dementia or depression. **If you notice any sudden changes, think of a delirium.** Prompt medical attention may help to prevent a hospital admission.

## What to look out for:

Delirium can develop quickly, usually over hours or days.

A person with delirium may:

- ☐ Become confused and forgetful
- ☐ Become unable to pay attention
- ☐ Become different from their normal selves
- ☐ Become either very agitated or quiet and withdrawn
- ☐ Become unsure of the time of day or where they are
- ☐ Have garbled or confused speech
- ☐ Have difficulty in following a conversation
- ☐ Have changes to their sleeping habits, such as staying awake at night and being drowsy during the day
- ☐ See or hear things that are not there, but which are very real to them
- ☐ Lose control of their bladder or bowels.

## If you notice signs of delirium:

- Call the patient's GP immediately.
- Tell the practice you suspect delirium and request an appointment that day.

**GP phone number:**

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**Doctor's name:**

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**Which practice?**

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**After hours phone number:**

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## What causes delirium?

Delirium can have many causes. Most commonly it is caused by:

- Infection
- Constipation
- Dehydration
- Strong pain
- Medicines

**What else can family or carers do?**

- Once the person has appropriate medical care, you can still help care for them.
- Encourage and assist someone with delirium to have enough food and fluids.
  - Knowing the time of day can reduce confusion. Remind the person where they are, and what day and time it is.
  - It is reassuring for people with delirium to see familiar people. Visit as often as you can and try to be available to help with their care.
  - Let staff know any special personal information that may help calm and orient someone with delirium, such as the names of family and friends.
  - Discuss current medications and effects of any recently started medications with GP

**Other contacts**

**Health Direct – 1800 022 222**

Speak to a registered nurse or doctor 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to get health advice you can trust. This is a free service.

**Medicinewise** - <https://www.nps.org.au/>

Information to help you make the best decisions about your medicines and medical tests.

**Notes**

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