

think
Delirium

The Age Space Guide to Delirium

agespace

Delirium is a symptom of many serious illnesses in older people. Make sure that you know to look out for delirium, so you can get treatment for the person you care for before it's too late.

What is Delirium?

Delirium is a mental condition, characterised by confusion, that is usually a symptom of another health problem. Delirium usually comes on rapidly, and can last for between a few hours and a few weeks.

What Causes Delirium

Many common health problems can cause delirium in older people. Some of the most common causes are:

- Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs)
- Dehydration
- Constipation
- Recent Surgery

The main difference between dementia and delirium is that delirium symptoms come on suddenly and not gradually

Spot the Symptoms

Delirium symptoms may not all present all of the time, can fluctuate hour-to-hour, and tend to get worse in the evenings.

There are three types of Delirium: **Hypoactive Delirium**, **Hyperactive Delirium**, and **Mixed Delirium**. In Hypoactive Delirium you often see symptoms like: socially withdrawn, lethargic, sleepy. Hyperactive Delirium is more associated with behaviour above the norm: aggression, combative and restlessness. Mixed Delirium is a mixture of both types.

There are some **key symptoms** that are common across all types which you should look out for:

- Fluctuations in alertness
- Rapid changes in mood
- Poor memory and recollection of recent events
- Fear or paranoia
- Visual or auditory hallucinations

If you think that someone you care for is showing signs of delirium which have come on rapidly, seek medical support as soon as possible by either calling 111 or making an appointment with your GP.

Find out more at www.agespace.org/delirium-guide