

The Age Space agespace taking care of care

Guide to Delirium

Think
Delirium

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.



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

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

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

In Hypoactive Delirium you often see symptoms like: socially withdrawn, lethargic, sleepy.

Hyperactive Delirium

Hyperactive Delirium is more associated with behaviour above the norm: aggression, combative and restlessness.

Mixed Delirium

Mixed Delirium is a mixture of both types.

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



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