

Where can I learn more about delirium?

If you have more questions about delirium ask your healthcare team.

Additional resources can be found at:

Canadian Coalition for Seniors Mental Health



<https://ccsmh.ca/projects/delirium/>

e-Mental Health



<https://www.ementalhealth.ca/Canada/Delirium-Information-for-Parents-and-Caregivers/index.php?m=article&ID=24408>

How to Recognize Delirium [Video]



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hwz9M2jZi_o

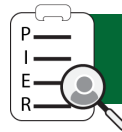


Delirium

Information for older adults, families and caregivers



Image by Risa Yustissa via [Noun Project](#)



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[saskhealthauthority.ca](https://www.saskhealthauthority.ca)

Healthy People, Healthy Saskatchewan

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What is delirium?

Delirium is a sudden, temporary onset of confusion that causes changes in the way people think and behave.

What causes delirium?

There are a number of things that can lead to delirium. Some more common causes are:

- Infections
- Medication side effects
- Dehydration or malnutrition
- Constipation
- Uncontrolled pain
- Alcohol or illicit substance use
- Being in unfamiliar environments

What are some signs of delirium?

There are 2 main types of delirium: **hyperactive** and **hypoactive**. The signs of delirium fluctuate over time, and a person may have signs of both types.

Hypoactive delirium is the most common type. People with **hypoactive delirium** may:

- Look very sleepy
- Move slowly and be less active than normal
- Not speak or interact
- Be confused

People with **hyperactive delirium** may:

- Be restless or even agitated
- Hallucinate (hearing or seeing things)
- Have delusions (believe something to be true when it is not)
- Be confused
- Not cooperate/resist care

How is delirium treated?

Delirium is treated by identifying and treating the underlying cause.

Even once the cause is identified and treated, it can take days, or even weeks, for the delirium to clear.

Sometimes medications are needed to temporarily support people with delirium.

How can I help a loved one with delirium?

- Encourage visits from familiar people.
- Keep familiar items at hand if possible (example: blanket, pillow, photo).
- Make sure the person has their aids (example: dentures, glasses, hearing aids, walkers, safe slippers/shoes).
- Remind them of the date, time and location and try to keep a clock and calendar visible.
- Encourage your loved one to eat and drink throughout the day (check with healthcare team first). Bring in their favorite foods.
- Inform the healthcare team of any changes you notice in you loved one's behaviour.
- Soothe your loved one with reassurance, hand holding, a massage or what works for them.
- Talk about current events, or read aloud to them.

Can delirium be prevented?

Not all cases of delirium are preventable, but taking the same actions that you would take to support a loved one with delirium may also prevent delirium from developing while they are in the emergency department or hospital.



[Image](#) by [Sabine van Erp](#) via [Pixabay](#)

Take care of yourself

It can be very difficult to be with a person with delirium. Often people with delirium say or do things that are upsetting. Remember this is not their true self, and they likely will not remember the event.

While you may want to do everything you can to support them, it is also important to look after yourself. Make sure you take regular breaks, rest, and eat and drink regularly.