

You Can Help Prevent Delirium

What is delirium?

Delirium is a sudden confused state of mind. It is a common problem in older people in the hospital. Delirium can be prevented and treated.

What does delirium look like?

People with delirium can act confused and may:

- be restless and upset
- slur their speech
- not make any sense
- act differently
- drift between sleep and wakefulness
- have trouble concentrating
- see and hear imaginary things
- be unaware of surroundings
- mix up days and nights
- be forgetful

What can you do?

Promote Healthy Rest and Sleep



- Reduce noise, distractions and unnecessary lighting
- Add comfort with a pillow, blanket, warm drink or back rub
- Avoid sleeping medications when possible

Promote Mental Stimulation



- Arrange for familiar people to visit regularly
- Talk about current events and surroundings
- Read out loud
- Try large print or talking books

Promote Physical Activity



- Avoid using restraints
- Help with sitting and walking
- Talk to the Nurse about how you can help with exercises and safe activities

Ways to Help

Promote Healthy Eating



- After checking with staff:
 - Encourage and help with eating
 - Offer fluids frequently

Promote Healthy Hearing



- Encourage hearing aids and amplifiers when needed
- Make sure hearing aids are working
- If in doubt, talk to the speech or hearing specialist

Promote Healthy Vision



- Encourage the use of glasses and keep them clean
- Use enough light
- Consider magnify glass or eye exam

Health Promotion and Prevention Really Works!

The Delirium Prevention and Education Project Sponsored by RGPC – Regional Geriatric Program central.
An initiative of the Committee for the Enhancement of Elder Friendly Environments (CEEFE).

For more information: 905-777-3837 ext. 12440.

Dr. Sharon Inouye MD, MPH, Professor of Medicine, Yale University, School of Medicine