

Delirium is a sudden change in mental state (occurring within hours to days).

Some common causes of delirium include:

- Being sick
- Low oxygen
- New or unfamiliar surroundings
- New medications
- Recovering from surgery

Delirium can happen to anyone. Hospital patients over the age of 70 have a higher risk of delirium. Delirium is serious. It can lengthen your hospital stay and contribute to falls. It can be frightening for patients and their families.

Tips for preventing delirium:

- Stay oriented. Look at a calendar, clock, cell phone or newspaper to make sure you know the date and time.
- Open curtains or blinds and turn on lights. Light helps maintain natural rhythms of the body.
- Wear your glasses, hearing aids and dentures. If necessary, have someone bring them to you in the hospital.
- Be active. Exercise is a great way to prevent physical and mental decline. Follow the advice of your medical team for any activity restrictions.
- Exercise your mind. Do puzzles and play games to keep your brain active.
- Maintain social contact. If family cannot visit you, stay in touch by phone, e-mail and video chats.
- Limit daytime napping. Too much napping lowers your quality of sleep at night.
- Avoid sleeping pills. If you take sleeping pills at home, ask your medical team if you can safely lower your dose or if an alternative such as melatonin might be right for you.
- Keep a notebook. Make notes of the events of the day to help your memory. Write down questions you have for your medical team and the answers they provide.

Notify your medical team right away if you have:

- New confusion
- Disorientation
- Hallucinations