

# Delirium Prevention Education

## Understanding Delirium: What Patients and Families Need to Know

### What is Delirium?

Delirium is a **sudden change in attention, awareness, or thinking**. It can cause confusion and changes in behavior.

The good news:

- Often **preventable**
- Usually **reversible**
- Common in adults 65+ during hospital stays but often short-lived

### Who is at Higher Risk?

You may be at higher risk if you:

- Are age 65 or older
- Have an infection, recent surgery, or dehydration
- Take 5 or more medications
- Have vision or hearing problems
- Have trouble sleeping

Please tell your doctor or nurse if you:

- Have memory problems or dementia
- Have had delirium before
- Drink 2 or more alcoholic drinks daily
- Take medications for depression, anxiety, or sleep

### Early Warning Signs

Family members should watch for:

- Sudden confusion
- Trouble focusing
- Agitation or withdrawal
- Hallucinations
- Changes in alertness that come and go

Report any of these changes right away.

### How We Help Prevent and Treat Delirium

Our team focuses on:

- Reviewing medications carefully
- Promoting healthy sleep
- Encouraging early movement after surgery
- Managing pain effectively
- Keeping patients oriented to time and place
- Making sure glasses and hearing aids are used
- Providing activities like music or puzzles to keep the mind active

### How Families Can Help

#### Mental Changes

- Report sudden confusion or changes in thought process
- Bring glasses, hearing aids, dentures
- Remind your loved one of the date, time, and place

#### Movement/Mobility

- Support walking or movement as recommended
- Avoid long periods in bed

#### Medications

- Ask if high-risk medications are being given (sleeping pills, pain, anxiety meds)
- Make sure medication lists are accurate

#### What Matters

- Share routines, hobbies, and preferences
- Help reinforce recovery goals
- Support comfort and good sleep habits

Based on the Institute for Healthcare Improvement Age-Friendly Health Systems 4Ms Framework (2023).