



Delirium

Alzheimer's

Delirium is not a disease but instead a set of symptoms causing a rapid change in the person's reaction, thinking, mood and actions, occurring quickly from a few hours to a few days. The person can have more than one sign and can change between slower and more active mental states. Older people with dementia are at greater risk. Their health could be in serious danger, and they may need fast medical treatment.

Signs

Watch for a sudden change in mental thinking, attention, and action.

- Increased confusion
- Sudden change in how they act
- Less aware, less focus
- Fear, paranoia, delusions, or hallucinations
- More upset, nervous or restless
- Sleeps for a long time



Causes

- Infection (urinary tract infection, pneumonia, COVID)
- Dehydration
- Worsening or start of a health condition
- Reaction to medication
- Alcohol abuse
- Uncontrolled pain
- Surgery
- Hospitalization

Strategies

- See your primary medical provider quickly to begin treatment of the cause
- Ask for a same-day appointment with your medical provider or go to an urgent care center
- Bring a list of their medications
- Provide all the facts of what symptoms and when they started
- If your person is hospitalized:
 - Be with them at the hospital as much as you can
 - Be sure they have their glasses, hearing aids, walker, or wheelchair
 - Keep the room quiet, turn off the TV
 - Bring objects they like: pillow, blanket, photos
 - Use gentle touch, massage and/or music to soothe
 - Do not argue with their delusional thoughts or hallucinations
 - Get your person up and moving
- Getting better from delirium can take days to months, so get help fast



Banner.

Alzheimer's Institute &
Sun Health Research Institute

For more information, visit BannerHealth.com/Alzheimers or tune in to our podcast, *Dementia Untangled*