



**Delirium is** a sudden change in mental status that may come and go or last for hours or days.

Thoughts and speech may be jumbled and there may be confusion about time and place, who you are and why you are there.

**Delirium is not** a disease or illness, but a condition due to:

- Worsening or advanced disease
- Decreased organ function
- Infections
- Changes in surroundings/care givers
- Medication side effects

**Signs and symptoms of delirium are:**

- Disturbed sleep-wake cycle (up all night, sleep all day)
- Mood Changes (tearful, cross, irritable, agitated, and showing no interest in things)
- Seeing or hearing things that are not there
- Confusion that may be worse at night
- Difficulty focusing on conversations or surroundings
- At times drowsy, at times restless
- Not recognizing surroundings, family or familiar things

**Questions or concerns?**  
Call a hospice nurse at 513-891-7700.

# How to help manage delirium

Delirium can happen as the disease advances. Your hospice nurse will discuss ways to manage the symptoms and make your loved one more comfortable. To help you to feel better prepared, some common things you can do may include:

- Keep the patient safe.
- Explain what you are going to do before doing it. For example, “My name is Sue and I am going to help you safely move to the chair now.”
- Offer support such as “I am right here with you.”
- Try to maintain a routine.
- Offer simple choices.
- If they are content and happy, enjoy your time with them.
- If they are agitated, distract or divert their attention; offer love and support.
- Do not argue with their “reality” or confusion.
- Provide a quiet, peaceful setting; avoid sudden, loud noises.
- Play their favorite music or sounds.
- Keep a night light on in the room.
- Place pictures and familiar objects in their surroundings.
- Notify your hospice nurse of any medication changes.
- Encourage conversation about favorite stories from the past.
- It’s difficult to accept they may not remember your name or who you are. If they could, they would, but their disease simply won’t allow them to.



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