

Advice when sharing facilities with people who may be confused (page 1 of 2)

You have been given this leaflet to help you as at any time there may be a patient on your ward who is confused and could be wandering and you may wonder what you should do in those circumstances.

The following information may be helpful if you are approached by a patient who seems confused.

Few of us are born knowing how to communicate with a person who is confused or agitated. If you do feel anxious about any of your fellow patients, please speak to the nurse looking after you.

Any person admitted to hospital is likely to be anxious or frightened which can cause them to be forgetful, angry, anxious or agitated. Patients can also experience confusion when they have an infection. If someone is confused they may not be able to express pain in the normal way which can add to their agitation.

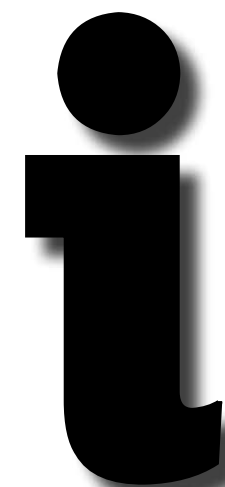
Patients with longer term forgetfulness, such as dementia, can also be confused and anxious during a stay in hospital as their fragile security is threatened by the unfamiliar environment, faces and routines. Feeling insecure can lead to behaviour that, while it is understandable, presents challenges for other patients as well as those trying their best to give care and treatment.

Patients with confusion are often more disturbed at night and we understand that this can be upsetting for other patients. There are no easy solutions if this does happen but the nurses and doctors caring for patients do try to avoid giving inappropriate medication wherever possible as it can cause further confusion. They are equally very aware of the need for patients to get their sleep so will make every effort to try and contain these situations.

Advice on how to communicate

If you are faced with a potentially difficult situation, you can help defuse it by maintaining a positive attitude on the ward, so:

- **be friendly.** Say who you are, using your own name if you are happy to share it with the patient. Ask the patient what they like to be called
- **be patient** as people can take longer to process information and may find communication difficult
- remember that **body language and tone speak louder than words.** Use plenty of eye contact and reassure with a smile



If you need your information in another language or medium (audio, large print, etc) please contact Customer Care on 0800 374 208 or send an email to: customer care@salisbury.nhs.uk

You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

Please complete The Friends & Family Test to tell us about your experience at: www.salisbury.nhs.uk/FriendsFamily or download our App from the Apple App store or Google Play Store.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

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- **try not to contradict the person** if they are obviously living in a different reality
 - * For example if they ask you for help or to find someone for them (who sounds like a family member or friend who is not present on the ward). Tell them you are happy to ask a passing member of staff to help them, or ring your call bell for assistance. If you are happy to talk to them while waiting for assistance, strike up a conversation about that person which may prompt some happy memories
 - * a person may become persistent about a particular topic and become frustrated if they are not acknowledged. Acknowledge the person's concern, even if it is illogical, while you are attracting the attention of a member of staff
- **use simple words** and short sentences if you need to explain what you are doing
- **focus on what the person can do**, not what they cannot. For example don't give too many instructions that might unfairly test a damaged memory.
- reminiscing can be a delight to an older person whose memory is failing. **Listening to stories of the past** can be both interesting and rewarding.

For any further advice, please speak to any member of the ward team looking after you.