

Useful websites

The European Delirium Association

www.europeandeliriumassociation.com

The Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership

www.awp.nhs.uk

Alzheimer's Association

www.alzhiemers.org.uk

Health Talk Online

www.healthtalk.org

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If you need your information in another language or medium (audio, large print, etc) please contact the Customer Care Team on 0800 374208 or email: 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.

The Friends and Family Test - Please complete The Friends and Family Test to tell us about your experience at www.salisbury.nhs.uk/FriendsFamily or download our app to your smartphone from the Apple App Store and the 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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Delirium

A guide for patients and relatives

information

Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust

What is delirium?

The word 'delirium' is used to describe a severe state of confusion. People suffering from delirium:

- cannot think clearly
- have trouble paying attention
- have difficulties understanding what is going on around them
- may see or hear things that are not there. These things are very real to them
- can be affected very quickly. The degree of confusion can vary a lot throughout the day and night.

The main point is that the person with delirium is absolutely convinced about what they are seeing and/or hearing. It can be terrifying for them and very worrying for relatives and friends.

Often someone who is delirious will still recognise friends and family although they will not generally believe their reassurances.

What causes delirium?

Experts think delirium is caused by a change in the way the brain is working. This can be caused by:

- infections
- certain medications
- severe pain
- alcohol, sedatives or pain killers.

Who is most likely to suffer from delirium?

People who:

- have dementia
- are advanced in age
- have had major surgery
- have poor eyesight or hearing
- have depression or other health issues.

How can I help someone with delirium?

- speak clearly and calmly
- remind your relative or friend of the day, time, where they are and familiar things such as home
- ensure they have items like their glasses, hearing aids and dentures
- be patient and give reassurance.

How long does it take to get better?

Delirium gets better when the cause is treated. A sufferer can recover very quickly, but it can take several days or weeks.

Conclusion

Delirium can be a very distressing for patients and their families, but most sufferers get better with treatment and time.

If you have any concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to speak to one of the nurses.