

# **DELIRIUM**

**INFORMATION FOR  
VISITORS**

***ENGLISH***

## Introduction

This brochure is designed to provide families and friends with information about delirium and describes how you as visitors can contribute to the well being of the patient.

The symptoms of delirium described below, can sometimes be very frightening for the patient. However, not all patients have the same symptoms and therefore the suggestions in this brochure are general.

The medical and nursing staff on the ward are available to give you individual advice as required.

## Delirium : What is it?

Delirium is a state of acute confusion that occurs as a response to physical illness or changes in medication. Delirium has a medical cause and usually resolves as the cause is treated.

The person with a delirium may display one or all of the following symptoms:

- disorientation e.g. do not know where they are or what day it is.
- have difficulty paying attention

- fluctuate from being sleepy to being alert.
- have periods of confusion.
- may see things that aren't there (hallucinations) or
- may have strange ideas (delusions).

## Suggestions for family and friends that may assist when visiting a patient experiencing delirium.

- When visiting maintain a calm and gentle manner with your family member or friend.
- Remind them where they are and the time of day.
- Visitors should only be the people who are close or very familiar to the patient.
- If the patient does not recognise you, remind them gently who you are, for example 'Mum, it's Mary your daughter'.
- A lot of visitors at once may be too overwhelming for the patient.

- It may be comforting for the patient to have you there at the most confused times (speak to the nurse about this). This is often in the late afternoon or night. Just quietly sitting with the person can help.
- Don't question the person about their condition while they are confused. Speak to the staff to obtain information.
- Ask the nurse if the patient is able to walk independently. If so encourage this when you are there.
- If the patient is able to drink and eat, encourage this while you are there. You may want to bring in the patient's favourite snacks or drinks. Check with the nurse if you are unsure.
- Don't argue with the patient. If they see things that aren't there or have strange ideas, don't agree with them. Acknowledge their feelings and reassure if they are frightened.
- Bring in a photo or familiar object to help orientate the patient to their new surroundings.