



Delirium



Overview

This is a serious disturbance in your mental state. With it, you don't think clearly. It can happen suddenly, leaving you disoriented and confused. You may not be able to understand what's happening around you.

Causes

Why does it happen? Well, it can be caused by a wide range of factors. For some, it's linked to dementia. For others, it's caused by a serious illness, infection or disorder. It can be triggered by a stay in a hospital or nursing home. Alcohol or drug use can cause it. Sometimes it happens to people who are dehydrated, in severe pain or deprived of sleep. And, delirium is linked to certain medications, including anesthesia.

Symptoms

The symptoms of delirium can come on quickly. They may come and go over a period of hours or days. You may be confused, and when you speak you may not make sense. You may see or hear things that aren't there. You may become angry, excited, or have some other change in your emotional state. It may be hard for you to concentrate, and you may have memory problems. Your sleeping may be affected, and you may have other issues. Some people who have delirium are agitated. Some seem sleepy and depressed. And others swing back and forth between these two states.

Treatment

How do we treat it? It depends on the reason for your delirium. We can give you drugs to manage the symptoms of delirium. But we also may need to make other changes. We may need to treat an underlying health issue. We may need to change a medication you're taking. We may need to make a change in your environment. Your doctor will create a plan that's right for you.

