

**Adapted from** ICUDelirium.org

**Developed by Surgical Intensive Care Unit -HGH**

If you have any concerns or questions about delirium, ask the care team.

Surgical Intensive Care Unit- HGH

[www.moph.gov.qa](http://www.moph.gov.qa)

# Delirium in the Intensive Care Unit

A Guide for Patients and Families



## Patient and Family Education

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#### What is delirium?

Delirium is a temporary state of confusion. It may act as a source for a person to have unclear thoughts and may affect their attention and focus. The occurrence of Delirium can be as quick as few hours or days. It usually lasts for a couple of hours or days but may last longer. Delirium is a common, serious, and frequently a preventable problem for the older patients admitted in the hospital. If immediate treatment is not given Delirium can slow the healing and recovery process.

#### Who is at risk for delirium?

People who:

- Are older than 65 years.
- Already have dementia or depression.
- Are not functionally independent.
- Have reduced vision or hearing.
- Are dehydrated/malnourished.
- Take many medications.
- Have many underlying health conditions.
- Had surgery.

#### Causes of Delirium

Delirium is resulted by an abnormal brain functioning. The causes can be:

- Less oxygen supply to the brain.
- Inability of the brain to use the oxygen.
- Chemical changes occur in the brain.
- Presence of any infection.
- Severe pain.
- Any existing medical illness.
- Use of alcohol, sedatives, or certain medicines.

#### What are the symptoms of delirium?

Persons affected with delirium may show the following symptoms:

- Struggling to understand what is happening in their surroundings.
- Confusion about daily events, daily routines, and in identifying people around them.
- Saying things that do not make sense.
- Personality changes.
- Seeing or hearing things that are not really there.
- Having thoughts of people trying to harm them.
- Becoming silent and unusually calm.
- Becoming restless, stressed or anxious.
- Changes in sleeping and eating pattern.

#### How to Help a Patient with Delirium?

- Use simple words or sentences in a soft way.
- Orient the patient about the time, day and date.
- Talk to them about their relatives and friends.
- Make sure to get their glasses, and hearing aids if they use them already.
- Make sure to provide the patient with their favorite music or other entertainment if possible.
- You may be asked to sit with your loved ones and calm them down if they are affected with Delirium.
- May have to use protective gloves as and when needed to safeguard the patient from hurting themselves.