

# DELIRIUM

HARMS  
BRAIN  
HEALTH



**What is it?** A serious medical condition, delirium is a **sudden change in thinking and behavior** that most commonly affects older adults following hospital admission.

**Symptoms** come and go quickly and can vary wildly, including **confusion, personality changes, hallucinations, diet and sleep disruptions, and rambling speech.**

If you or a family member is **facing surgery or hospitalization**, take steps to help prevent delirium

## Tips for Individuals

- "Prehab" for any planned hospitalizations; prepare as if you were training for a sports event (exercise, diet and good sleep).
- Bring a list of your current medications and supplements.
- Ask for delirium/cognitive screening before undergoing elective surgeries.
- Bring hearing aids, eyeglasses, and dentures.
- Ask friends and family to stay with you 24/7.
- Get exposure to sunlight during the day.
- Close the door to your room, use earplugs, a sleep mask or bring a familiar pillow or blanket to sleep better.
- Don't make important financial or other decisions until fully recovered.



## Tips for Caregivers

- Seek medical help if you notice if your loved one is "just not themselves."
- Assist in orientating your loved one to know the day and time.
- Question healthcare providers about medications being used; some common medications increase risk of delirium.
- Help your loved one to get out of bed and moving after surgery.
- Prepare to assist after leaving the hospital because brain fog can last a long time.



**Preserving Your Brain Health During Illness or Surgery:** GCBH Recommendations to Prevent and Treat Delirium

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For more brain health tips see **StayingSharp.org** • DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26419/pia.00101.002>

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**Brain Health**  
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