

# Delirium in adults

Information for the public

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[nice.org.uk](http://nice.org.uk)

## About this information

NICE quality standards help to improve key areas of health or social care so that people are offered the best care available.

This information explains the care and support described in NICE quality standard 63 on delirium.

## Delirium

The quality standard for delirium is made up of 5 statements that describe high-quality care for adults with delirium. These statements set out the quality of care you should receive.

1. Adults admitted to hospital or to a residential care home or nursing home who are thought to be at risk of delirium are assessed to spot any recent changes in their behaviour that may show that they have delirium. A person is at risk of delirium if any of the following apply: they are 65 or older, already have difficulties with memory or understanding (known as cognitive impairment), have dementia, have a broken hip or are seriously ill.
2. Adults admitted to hospital or to a residential care home or nursing home who are thought to be at risk of delirium are assessed and offered care to reduce their chances of getting delirium that takes into account their particular needs and circumstances.
3. Adults in hospital or in a residential care home or nursing home who have delirium are not given antipsychotic medication (which can be used to treat people who experience hallucinations or

delusions) unless they are very distressed or are thought to be a risk to themselves or others, and if other ways of calming them down have not worked or are not suitable.

4. Adults with delirium, and their family members and carers, are given information that explains what delirium is and includes descriptions of other people's experiences of delirium.

5. Adults who have had delirium in hospital have their diagnosis of delirium shared with their GP by hospital staff when they are discharged.

## Your care

Your health and social care team should explain any treatment, care or support you should be offered so that you can decide together what is best for you. NICE has also produced advice and quality standards on [improving the experience of care for adults using the NHS](#) and [improving the experience of care for adults using NHS mental health services](#) which you might like to read.

We also have more information on the NICE website about [using health and social care services](#).

## More information on delirium

NICE has also produced guidance (advice) on [Delirium](#). The guidance was used to develop this quality standard.

### *Sources of advice and support for adults with delirium, their families and carers*

- Alzheimer's Society, 0300 222 11 22  
[www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)
- ICUsteps  
[www.icusteps.org](http://www.icusteps.org)
- The Intensive Care Society, 020 7280 4350  
[www.ics.ac.uk](http://www.ics.ac.uk)

You can also go to [NHS Choices](#) for more information about health and social care.

NICE is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of any information or advice provided by these organisations.

A number of organisations who share NICE's commitment to improving quality in this area formally support this quality standard. They may also be able to provide advice and support. For a list of these organisations see the [Delirium quality standard](#) on the NICE website.

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### *Accreditation*

