Going home after delirium

Many people recover well after delirium, but recovery varies. Some recover quickly; others take weeks or months, and some have lasting changes in thinking or independence.

Recovery is often slow and uneven

The mind's recovery often lags behind the body's. A person can be walking and eating well while their concentration, memory and confidence are still catching up. Progress is also uneven: a good day, then a flat one, then two better ones.

Before leaving hospital

Tell staff what help you can realistically provide. Ask for a written plan covering:

- What is still causing concern, and whether the causes have been treated
- Help with medicines, meals, drinking, washing, walking and supervision
- Changes to medicines and any swallowing or fluid advice
- Who will review recovery, when, and whom to contact sooner

Ask for delirium to be recorded in the discharge information sent to their usual doctor.

Slow to improve but not getting worse

Delirium can last for weeks or months, even after the causes found so far have been treated. Ask for a review if the person is not improving, or if no clear cause has been found. You do not need to wait several weeks before raising a concern.

Our plan

Still causing concern

Medicine changes

Help agreed at home

Who will review recovery, and when

Who to contact sooner, and how

What helps at home

- Regular drinks and meals, little and often if appetite is poor
- Glasses and hearing aids on, clean and working
- A steady routine, with daylight and activity in the day and quiet at night
- Getting up and moving every day, building up gradually
- Familiar faces, and one conversation at a time
- A calendar and clock in view

Follow any discharge advice about swallowing, drinks and walking. Do not give food or drink if the person is too drowsy to swallow safely.

Suddenly worse: get help now

A sudden deterioration after discharge needs medical assessment now. Do not put it down to normal ups and downs.

At home or elsewhere outside a care setting, phone the local emergency number now. In a care home, tell staff immediately.

Tell them if the person is hard to wake, barely responds, struggles to breathe, has signs of a stroke, has had a seizure or head injury, or is getting worse quickly. More: https://deliriumsupport.com/get-help-now/

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