



Geriatric Fast Facts

Topic: What Causes Delirium?

Almost any medical illness, intoxication, or medication can cause delirium. Delirium is often multifactorial in etiology and each potential cause should be investigated. The following list of causes is by no means exhaustive:

Common Causes of Delirium

- D** Dementia, Dehydration, Detox (ETOH or sedative withdrawal), Deficiency state (nutrition, vitamins), Discomfort/pain
- E** Electrolyte imbalance, Elimination abnormalities (urinary retention, constipation), Encephalopathy
- L** Lungs, Liver dysfunction, Lack of sleep, Lesion/tumor
- I** Infection, Iatrogenic events, Infarction (cardiac, cerebral)
- R** Restraints, Restricted movement/mobility, Renal failure
- I** Injury – including head injury/stroke, Impaired sensory input (vision, hearing), Intoxication
- U** Unfamiliar environment, UTI
- M** Metabolic abnormalities (glucose, thyroid), Metastasis (brain)
*Medications

****Medications are the most common reversible cause of delirium.***