



Geriatric Fast Facts

Topic: Management of Delirium

Patients with **Delirium** are particularly vulnerable to **iatrogenic problems**, especially those due to physical and chemical restraints.

These patients also have up to a **10-fold higher risk** of medical complications including **death**, longer hospital stay, and premature admission to a long term care facility at discharge.

For **Best Course**, delirium requires **Early Recognition** and **Urgent Treatment**:

- 1.) Detect and flag delirium (The validated **Confusion Assessment Method (CAM)** can be put on chart).
- 2.) Identify and treat underlying disorders.
- 3.) Remove contributing factors (least restraint, discontinue drugs known to precipitate delirium).
- 4.) Help orient the patient (clock, calendar). Encourage patients who require glasses/hearing aids to wear them.
- 5.) Risk of deconditioning, atelectasis, and pressure ulcers can be minimized by mobilization and/or by sitting in a chair.
- 6.) Monitor hydration and nutrition; encourage and assist as necessary. Encourage family to participate.
- 7.) Psychoactive drug treatment may be required to treat agitation (not the delirium) and should be used **only** when the symptoms are causing significant distress or pose a risk to self or others.

.....Next Fast Facts: *Delirium vs. Dementia*.....