

Delirium is a sudden change or worsening of mental state and behaviour. It can cause confusion, poor concentration, sleepiness, memory loss, paranoia, agitation and reduced appetite and mobility.

Research suggests that doctors and carers should look out for signs of confusion or strange behaviour in frail older people because it could be an early warning sign of Covid-19

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-54353888>

Even if they have no cough or fever, delirium is more common in vulnerable over-65s than other, fitter people of the same age. But it's not yet clear why this extreme confusion or delirium happens. For one in five patients in hospital with Covid, delirium was their only symptom.

COVID-19 can and does cause delirium – it might be the only symptom.

A wide variety of clinical symptoms have been associated with COVID-19. When ordering a SARS-CoV-2 test it is NOT a requirement for the patient to meet the definition of a possible COVID-19 case.

To access community testing, if the definition is not met and the test is considered necessary by a clinical or public health professional, the box should be ticked on the online form.

Patients with acute respiratory infection, influenza-like illness, clinical or radiological evidence of pneumonia, or acute worsening of underlying respiratory illness, or fever without another cause should have a SARS-CoV-2 test, whether presenting in primary or secondary care.

As of the 2nd of October the following guidance was issued

In addition, the following clinical situations should prompt clinicians to consider SARS-CoV2 testing:

- *Onset of delirium (acute confusion) in older people, or in those with dementia or cognitive impairment. Due to communication difficulties these patients may be unable to report symptoms. New infections in people with dementia may be manifest as delirium.*
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-initial-investigation-of-possible-cases/investigation-and-initial-clinical-management-of-possible-cases-of-wuhan-novel-coronavirus-wn-cov-infection>

Delirium can also be caused by infections, hospital admissions, constipation and medications.

You can help to **prevent delirium** by:

- Thinking of it especially when you see a 'sleepy' patient
- Reducing the risk of AKI (Acute Kidney Injury) by temporarily stopping ACE/Diuretics/NSAID etc.
- Ensure hearing aids and glasses are worn
- Ensuring fluids are pushed: little and often
- Addressing issues such as pain and constipation

THINK SLEEPY: THINK HYPOACTIVE DELIRIUM: THINK COVID-19

More information on Delirium can be found at:
<https://www.bgs.org.uk/topics/delirium> If you suspect Delirium use the

Delirium for COVID-19 EDCR template which allows access to all the resources you need

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Resources

- Delirium prevention [poster](#)
- Delirium awareness [video](#)
- Delirium and dementia [video](#)
- [Time and Space Prompts](#) to prevent delirium