



**Brockville  
General Hospital**  
*Healthy People – Outstanding Care*

# Keep Your Mind and Body Active in Hospital

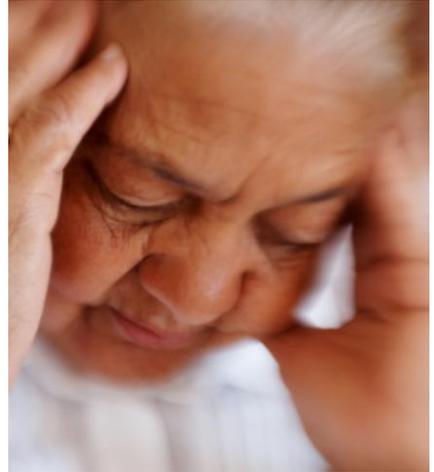
**A Patient and Caregiver Guide to Staying Safe:  
Preventing Delirium and Functional Decline**



# Keeping physically and mentally active can help you stay safe in hospital by preventing: **Delirium and Functional Decline**

## **What is Delirium?**

- It is a sudden and temporary state of confusion.
- Symptoms can change throughout the day and last from days to weeks.
- Delirium is different from dementia or Alzheimer's disease because it develops more quickly and may clear completely.
- Delirium is a serious condition. If you notice new symptoms such as confusion, memory problems, personality changes – ***please let your health care provider know as soon as possible.***



## **People with Delirium may:**

- Act confused.
- Have trouble paying attention and concentrating.
- Be forgetful and confused about where they are.
- Be upset and restless.
- Have a change in sleeping patterns (mix up days and nights) or sleep all day.
- See and hear imaginary things.

## **What can cause Delirium?**

- A change in environment or a new environment.
- Infection, illness, and some types of medications.
- A person is more likely to become delirious if he or she has:
  - Memory or thinking problems.
  - Severe illness causing them to stay in the hospital.
  - Not been eating or drinking well.
  - Difficulties with seeing or hearing.
  - Recently had surgery.

## **How is Delirium controlled?**

- Health care providers will try to find the cause of delirium by asking questions and doing some tests.
- Recognizing the symptoms and treating the cause early helps most people return to their normal selves.

## **What is Functional Decline?**

- It is a general weakness or inability to do normal or basic activities such as walking, bathing, toileting, and feeding.
- Staying in bed too long and being inactive can cause muscle weakness, balance problems, exhaustion and even falls.
- Many older adults with functional decline stay in the hospital longer, and may not be able to look after themselves at home.

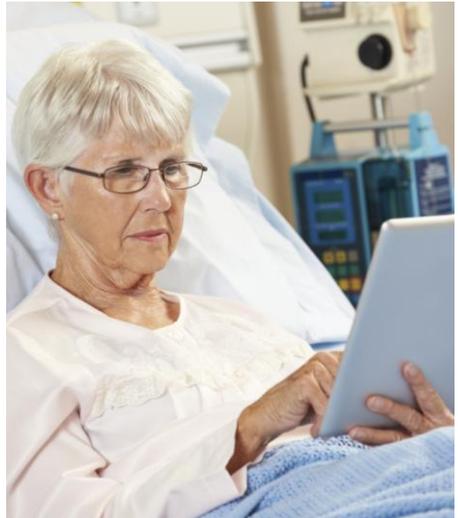
# How can you prevent Delirium and Functional Decline?

- Be physically and mentally active, especially while in hospital.

## Six Tips to Maintain Physical and Mental Well-being in Hospital:

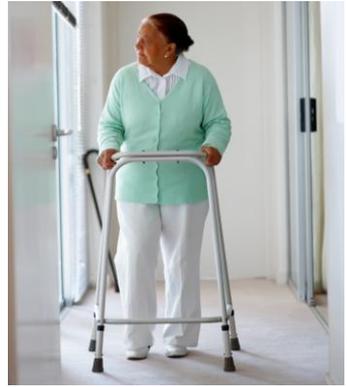
### 1. Stay mentally active

- Take part in hobbies and activities such as reading, doing puzzles and playing games.
- Have your family bring in music, books, magazines, and other hobbies or things that you enjoy.
- Talk to others about topics that interest you:
  - Current events or surroundings
  - Interesting past memories.
- Stay aware of your current surroundings:
  - Bring a bedside clock, calendar, and pictures from home.
- Ask family and friends to visit.



## 2. Stay physically active

- Frequently bend or move your legs and arms while in the bed or in the chair. This can help prevent joint stiffness.
- **Check with your nurse first to make sure you are safe to walk on your own.**
  - If able, try to walk 3 or more times a day to maintain strength and endurance.
  - If needed, use a walking aid such as a walker or cane or have someone walk with you.
- Make sure you have shoes or slippers with non-slip treads to walk safely.
- Do your everyday, normal activities on your own, for example combing your hair, dressing, and washing.



## 3. Eat and drink well

- **Unless otherwise told by a nurse or other staff member**, eat your meals and drink your fluids (6-8 cups per day).
- Try to sit up in the chair at your bedside for all meals.
- Clean your dentures after eating.
- If you cough while swallowing, tell your nurse immediately.



## 4. Maintain healthy hearing

- If you have hearing aids, wear them.
- If they are not working properly, check that the battery is charged.

## 5. Maintain healthy vision

- Bring your glasses to hospital.
- Wear your glasses and clean them often.
- Keep your room well lit during the day.
- If you have difficulty reading small print, try using a magnifying glass or arrange for an eye exam after you go home.

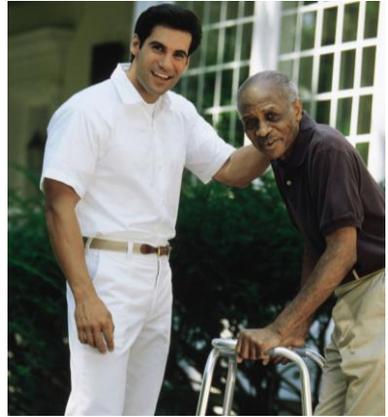


## 6. Maintain healthy sleep routines

- Try to stay awake in the daytime.
- Stop drinking fluids 2 hours before going to bed.
- Avoid caffeinated drinks (tea/coffee) in the evening.
- Keep soft light in the room when resting or sleeping.
- Add comfort with pillows or a warm blanket.

# Continue to stay active at home

- Keeping your mind and body active at home will also help to prevent delirium and functional decline.



## Continue to do these activities daily after you leave the hospital:

- Keep your mind active by doing hobbies such as playing games and doing puzzles.
- Walk and do simple exercises to keep up your energy level, balance, and strength.
- Eat and drink well (eat your meals on time).
- Use your glasses and hearing aids regularly.
- Maintain your regular sleeping routine by going to bed at your usual time.
- If possible, try not to use sleeping pills to help you sleep.
- If you get up at night, use a night light for safety.

**If you have questions, please ask your health care team.**

## Acknowledgements:

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- Hospital Elder Life Program (HELP)
- Seniors' Services
- Aysha Qamar

## References:

The Hospital Elder Life Program (HELP) © 2000. Sharon Inouye, MD, MPH  
[www.hospitalelderlifeprogram.org](http://www.hospitalelderlifeprogram.org)



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