

How hospitals can give safe care to people with cognitive impairments

This guide can help acute health services like hospitals recognise patients with memory and thinking problems early. It shows how to respond in the best way to keep patients safe and reduce harm.

The guide has 3 steps to improve care. For each step, health workers can take actions to support patients with cognitive impairment and help them receive safe, high-quality care.

Below we explain the 3 steps in plain language. You can read [A Better Way to Care](#) to find the original version of the steps.

Step 1: Pay attention to signs of confusion

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Be aware of patients who may have memory or thinking problems. Patients who are older, or who have intellectual disability, severe illness or hip fractures may be most at risk.

Watch for signs of delirium, which is a sudden change in a person's thinking and awareness. The patient may seem confused and find it hard to pay attention.

2. Ask questions and give support

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Find out if the patient has memory, thinking, or confusion problems. You can do this by talking to the patient or their family, carer or support person.

Respond quickly to manage risks and provide the support and care they need. Make sure you respect the patient's needs and wishes.

3. Offer care that respects the patient and meets their needs

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Give care that is safe and suited to the patient's individual needs. Work with the patient, their family, and carers to support their health and wellbeing.

Write down important information and make sure it is given to the patient and their:

- family, carer or support person, if this is what the patient wants and needs
- GP
- other relevant health services.

We trust this resource

We trust this resource because it is:

- Made to help, not for profit
- Made by people who know a lot about the topic

We've checked this resource, and you can [follow our guide to know if health information is true and right for you.](#)

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