

Could It Be Delirium?

The Important Differences Between Delirium, Dementia and Depression

Confusion, sudden memory changes, mood shifts, or withdrawal in older adults may point to delirium, dementia, or depression — but knowing the difference can be critical for timely treatment and recovery.



Confusion, memory loss, mood changes, or withdrawal in older adults should never be ignored.

While these symptoms may look similar, delirium, dementia, and depression are very different conditions that require different types of support and care.

SYMPTOMS	DELIRIUM	DEMENTIA	DEPRESSION
Onset	Sudden	Gradual	Gradual or situational
Attention Problems	Severe	Mild later on	Sometimes
Memory Loss	Temporary	Progressive	May appear forgetful
Hallucinations	Common	Sometimes later	Rare
Mood Changes	Rapid	Gradual	Persistent sadness
Medical Emergency	Yes	No	No
Often Treatable	Yes	Managed long-term	Yes

Seek urgent medical attention if an older loved one experiences:

- Sudden confusion
- Hallucinations
- Rapid personality changes
- Severe disorientation
- Extreme drowsiness
- Sudden decline after illness or surgery

Supporting Healthy Ageing Starts with Early Detection

INS LifeGuard helps older Australians and their families stay connected to proactive, nurse-led health monitoring and support, helping identify health concerns earlier and providing greater peace of mind.

The Most Important Questions Families Can Ask Healthcare Professionals

Many families feel overwhelmed in medical settings. Having a list of important questions can help you better understand treatment plans and care decisions.

Includes questions about:

- Medications and side effects
- Infection risks
- Mobility and fall prevention
- Cognitive changes
- Discharge planning

