



# Northern Health Palliative Care Top 10 Tips For Delirium



**HOT TIP**  
**May 2018**

1. Clinical presentation of delirium is variable.
2. Delirium is a common and distressing problem; be vigilant in your assessment for it.
3. There are often multiple concurrent risk factors and precipitating causes.
4. Reversibility of delirium depends on underlying causes and illness trajectory.
5. Screen regularly for delirium and diagnose promptly.
6. Management of delirium relies on three simultaneous actions:
  - Identify and treat the underlying causes.
  - Control of the symptoms of delirium.
  - Educate the patient / family about what is happening.
7. Look for and treat the underlying causes of delirium, if possible and appropriate.
8. Use non-pharmacological management in all cases of delirium.
9. Use medications to control symptoms when necessary.
10. If delirium is severe, consider it a medical emergency and work to bring under control as quickly as possible.

For more information about the assessment and management of delirium, please refer to the [BC Inter-Professional Palliative Symptom Management Guidelines](#)

## References:

Pallium Canada, January 2017 LEAP Mini Module 6 Delirium in Palliative Care: Top 10 Tips