

Altered Mental Status: Care Instructions



Your Care Instructions

Altered mental status is a change in how well your brain is working. As a result, you may be confused, be less alert than usual, or act in odd ways. This may include seeing or hearing things that aren't really there (hallucinations).

A mental status change has many possible causes. For example, it may be the result of an infection, an imbalance of chemicals in the body, or a chronic disease such as diabetes or COPD. It can also be caused by things such as a head injury, taking certain medicines, or using alcohol or drugs.

The doctor may do tests to look for the cause. These tests may include urine tests, blood tests, and imaging tests such as a CT scan. Sometimes a clear cause isn't found. But tests can help the doctor rule out a serious cause of your symptoms.

A change in mental status can be scary. But mental status will often return to normal when the cause is treated. So it is important to get any follow-up testing or treatment the doctor has suggested.

The doctor has checked you carefully, but problems can develop later. If you notice any problems or new symptoms, **get medical treatment right away**.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Be safe with medicines. Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.
- Have another adult stay with you until you are better. This can help keep you safe. Ask that person to watch for signs that your mental status is getting worse.

When should you call for help?



Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You passed out (lost consciousness).

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- Your mental status is getting worse.
- You have new symptoms, such as a fever, chills, or shortness of breath.
- You do not feel safe.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You do not get better as expected.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **J452** in the search box to learn more about "**Altered Mental Status: Care Instructions**".

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