

Features	Delirium	Dementia
Onset	Acute onset, sudden over hours or days.	Insidious, over months or years. (except for some cases of cerebrovascular dementia)
Course	Fluctuating.	Progressive.
Duration	Usually short but may be > 6 months & usually resolves with treatment.	Years – progressive and ends in death.
Consciousness	Altered/fluctuation.	Usually clear. Fluctuating consciousness in dementia with Lewy bodies.
Attention	Short attention span. Fluctuating with decreased ability to focus and easily distracted.	Usually unaffected or persistent mild impairment.
Orientation	Usually impaired but may fluctuate.	Impaired as disease progresses. Loss of ability to recognise function of everyday objects.
Memory	Impaired immediate and short-term memory.	Memory for immediate and recent events. Impaired inability to learn new information.
Psychomotor activity	Increased, decreased or mixed depending on the type.	Generally normal, but may be variable depending on stage of dementia.
Speech	Incoherent, loud, belligerent. Can be slow, hard to understand.	May have naming, and word finding problems.
Prognosis	Treatable and reversible, especially if caught early.	Progression can be slowed but not reversible.
Treatment	Treat cause. Monitor response. Be alert for relapse.	Cholinesterase inhibitors slow the progression of some dementias. Symptomatic treatment with environmental and staff approaches.