

Altered Mental Status

Effective: 11/01/2022

Supersedes:
N/A

Reference Procedures: [Blood Glucose](#)

Goals for patient care:

- Identify reversible causes and treat when applicable
- Protect patient from harm

This protocol applies to any patient who has suspected newly-acquired altered mental status (AMS), impaired decision-making capacity, confusion, etc.

Procedures/interventions:

The initial focus should be on airway patency, oxygenation, ventilation, and perfusion and treatment

- Assess patient for airway stability and manage airway as indicated
- Evaluate for respiratory distress and treat as indicated (see Breathing Difficulty Protocol)
- Evaluate for signs of hypoperfusion, and treat per appropriate protocol(s)
- Determine if patient requires physical restraint/chemical manipulation (see Behavior Disorder and Patient Restraint protocols)
- Obtain blood glucose level and treat as indicated (see Diabetic Emergencies protocol)
- Establish vascular access
- Treat seizure as indicated (see Seizure protocol)
- **If signs of trauma, (see Trauma protocol)**
- Assess for suspected CVA/TIA (see Stroke protocol)
- Initiate EKG monitoring and obtain 12-lead (see Dysrhythmias protocol)
- Monitor ETCO₂ for hypercapnia as indicated
- Consider obtaining temperature if concern for sepsis
- Consider naloxone administration
- Assess and treat poisoning/overdose as indicated (see Drug Overdose/Poisoning protocol)

Key consideration in patients with AMS:

- Focus on reversible causes
- Use bystanders and scene/environment to look for clues as to cause of AMS
- Medications and/or illicit substances are key history pieces
- Medical alert tags and advanced directives should be sought out