

# Altered Mental Status

**History**

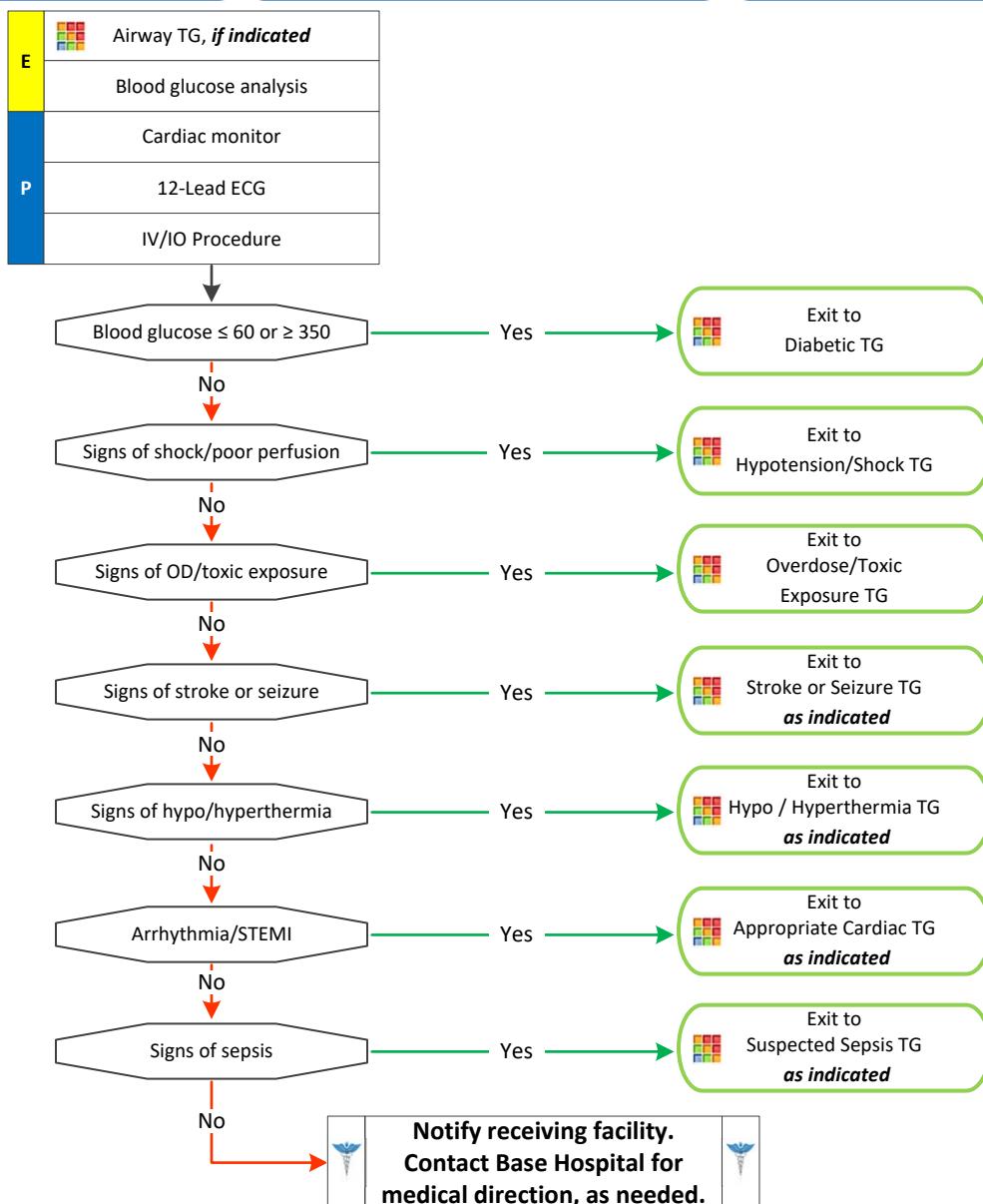
- Known diabetic or medical alert tag
- Drugs or drug paraphernalia
- Report of illicit drug use or toxic ingestion
- Past medical history
- Medications
- History of trauma or traumatic brain injury
- Change in condition
- Changes in feeding or sleep habits

**Signs and Symptoms**

- Change in baseline mental status
- Decrease mental status or lethargy
- Bizarre behavior
- Hypoglycemia (cool, diaphoretic skin)
- Hyperglycemia (warm, dry skin; fruity breath; Kussmaul respirations; signs of dehydration)
- Irritability

**Differential**

- Head trauma
- CNS (stroke, tumor, seizure, infection)
- Cardiac (MI, CHF)
- Hypothermia
- Infection or sepsis
- Thyroid
- Shock
- Diabetes
- Toxicological or ingestion
- Acidosis or alkalosis
- Environmental exposure
- Hypoxia
- Electrolyte abnormality
- Psychiatric disorder
- Sepsis



## Treatment Guideline A05

# Altered Mental Status

## Pearls

- **Pay careful attention to the head exam for signs of bruising or other injury.**
- Be aware of AMS as a presenting sign of an environmental toxin or Haz-mat exposure and protect personal safety and that of other responders who may already be exposed.
- It is safer to assume hypoglycemia than hyperglycemia if doubt exists. Recheck blood glucose after D-10 or Glucagon administration.
- Do not let alcohol confuse the clinical picture. Alcoholics frequently develop hypoglycemia and may have unrecognized injuries.
- Consider restraints if necessary for patient or personnel protection.



## Treatment Guideline A05

Page 2 of 2