



## *Information for You from Your Health Care Team*

### **What is Hydrocephalus?**

Hydrocephalus occurs when too much cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) builds up in the ventricles. If there is a blockage or not enough CSF gets absorbed, CSF may build up and may cause the ventricles in the brain to enlarge. This results in increased pressure in the head.

### **What is CSF?**

CSF means Cerebrospinal Fluid. This fluid protects the brain acting like a cushion to protect the brain from physical shocks.

### **What is Normal Pressure Hydrocephalus?**

Normal Pressure Hydrocephalus occurs when the ventricles in the brain become enlarged without an increase in pressure within these ventricles. The cause of this isn't known but it can be reversible.

### **Causes of Hydrocephalus:**

- When the normal pathway of CSF becomes blocked.
- When CSF is not absorbed properly.
- Head Trauma
- Bacterial meningitis

### **Some Signs & Symptoms:**

- Forgetfulness
- Gait Changes- slow unsteady pace
- Decrease ability to participate in conversation.
- Headache
- Vomiting
- Coordination problems
- Drowsiness
- Seizures

## **How is Hydrocephalus treated?**

- It is treated by using a tube called a ventricular shunt to decrease the pressure.

## **What is a Ventricular Shunt?**

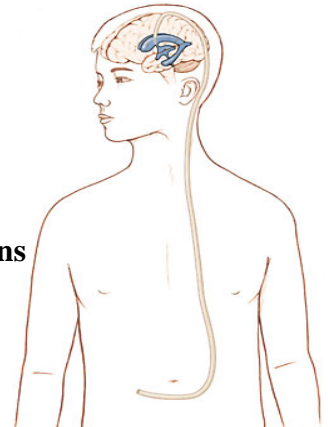
A ventricular shunt is a hollow plastic tube that is placed in the ventricle of the brain. The tube is then threaded under the skin from either:

- The brain to the abdomen. This is called a Ventricular-Peritoneal shunt
- The brain to the heart. This is called a Ventricular- Atrial Shunt.

The purpose of a shunt is to reduce the amount of **CSF** in the brain by draining it to the abdomen or heart. The draining of the **CSF** helps reduce the pressure in the brain.

**Call your Doctor immediately if you notice any of these symptoms. It could mean your shunt has become infected.**

- Fever greater than 101.5 rectally or greater than 100.5 by mouth.
- Irritability
- Swelling redness or drainage along the shunt tract or incision site.
- Headache
- Stiff Neck
- Constant abdominal complaints that do not go away.



**Speak up if you have any questions or concerns**

## **For further information:**

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Email: [hydroassoc@aol.com](mailto:hydroassoc@aol.com) Website: [www.hydroassoc.org](http://www.hydroassoc.org)

Reference: The Clinical Practice of Neurological and Neurosurgical Nursing  
Fifth Edition

Pictures: [www.cincinnatichildrens.org](http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org) & [www.med.wayne.edu](http://www.med.wayne.edu)

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