

Ventricular Shunt for Hydrocephalus

Hydrocephalus (hydro-water, **cephalus**-head) is an increase of cerebral spinal fluid (CSF) in the brain. This can be caused by problems with how the CSF is made, circulated, or absorbed. When CSF collects in the brain, the ventricles get bigger (see image 1 on last page). This makes pressure in the head increase, causing sickness.

Symptoms

Symptoms vary with age, and may include:

- Headache
- Vomiting
- Irritability
- Decreased appetite
- Fatigue
- Increased head size in infants
- “Sunset eyes” (eyes which do not look up)
- Blurred or double vision
- Clumsiness in older kids and adults

Treatment

To reduce pressure on the brain, the CSF must be drained. One way to do this is to place a shunt. A shunt is a soft, narrow piece of tubing that drains the extra CSF from the brain to the abdomen or the space around the heart or lungs. Once the shunt is placed, the CSF is absorbed by the body (see image 2 on last page).

Before Surgery

You will have a physical exam and lab tests done that include blood work and urinalysis. Schedule this exam with your doctor or with a nurse in our department. Complete this within 30 days of surgery. We may cancel surgery without an updated exam. Contact your insurer if you need a referral.

Stop these medicines for **two weeks** before surgery:

- Aspirin, Excedrin[®], Ascriptin[®], and Ecotrin[®].
- Vitamins and herbal supplements.
- Ibuprofen, Advil[®], Motrin[®], Nuprin[®], and Aleve[®].
- You may use acetaminophen (Tylenol[®]), if needed.

If you take prescription blood thinners, please discuss the timing for stopping these.

Avoid smoking and secondhand smoke for two weeks before surgery. Smoking delays wound **healing**.

You will be called the afternoon before surgery. You will be told what time you need to arrive and details about how to get ready.

During Surgery

A small hole will be made through the skull. Tubing will be placed through the hole into the brain. A one-way valve will be attached to the catheter and placed under the scalp. A small cut will be made where the catheter ends. This will take about two hours.

After Surgery

You will spend at least one night in the hospital. Once you are eating and drinking and there are no other concerns, you will be ready to go home.

You may have two bandages in place. One will be on your head and one on your torso. The bandages may stay in place until your follow-up clinic visit. Your bandages should remain clean and dry.

After discharge, you may resume your normal routine. You will need a regular follow up with a neurosurgeon and MRI scans to check the size of your ventricles.

When to Call

A shunt may not work if it becomes clogged, disconnected, or infected. Call **right away** if you notice any of these symptoms:

- Redness, pain or swelling of the skin along the length of the shunt, or at the incision sites.
- Drainage from the incision.
- Fever over 101.5°F within the first six months of surgery.
- **Any** symptoms of hydrocephalus.

Who to Call

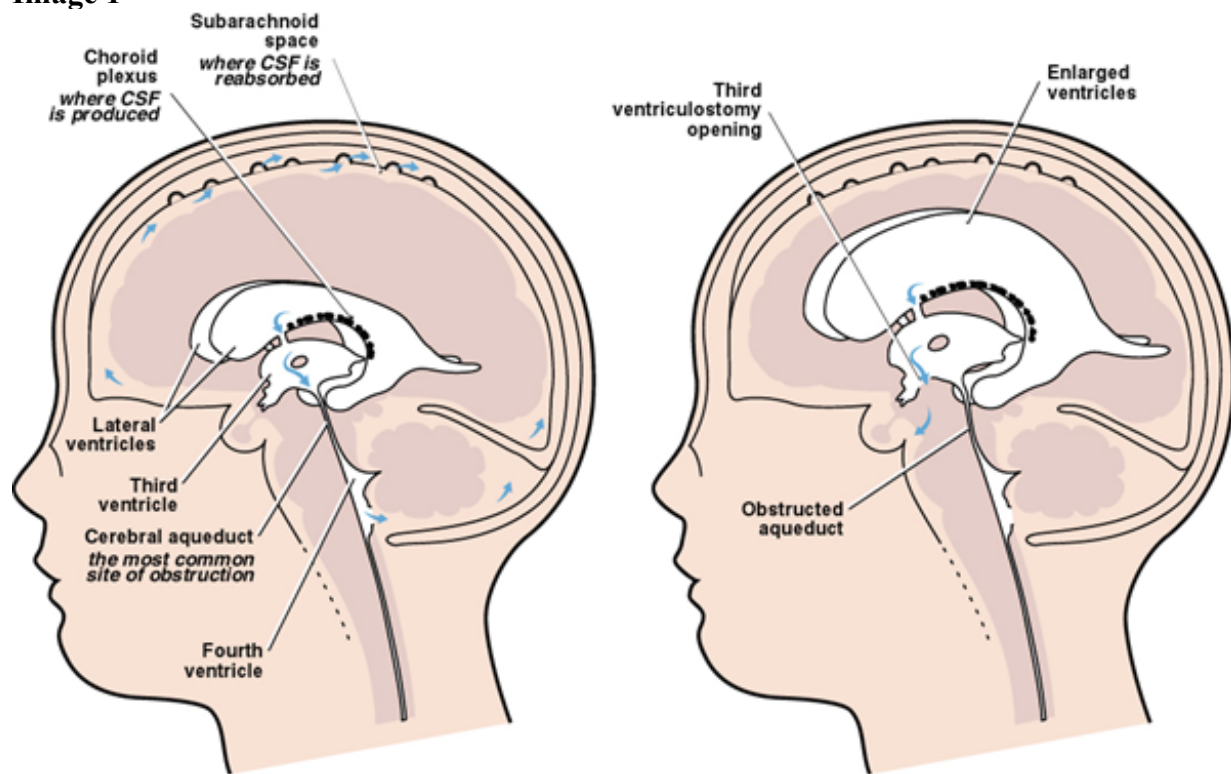
American Family Children's Hospital Clinic
(608) 263-6420

After hours, weekends, and holidays, please call the paging operator at **(608) 262-0486**. Ask for the neurosurgeon on call. Give your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.

If you live out of the area, please call
1-800-323-8942.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 3/2024 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#5258

Image 1



Normal Ventricles

Hydrocephalic Ventricles

Image 2

