

700 Children's Drive Columbus, Ohio 43205-2696 nationwidechildrens.org

VP SHUNT: CARE AT HOME

A ventricular (ven-TRICK-you-lar) shunt is a small tube that has been placed in your child's head (Picture 1). The shunt carries extra fluid from the head to the abdomen (Picture 2) where it is absorbed. Your child will soon be ready to leave the hospital. Here are a few things you will need to know to care for your child at home:

PROTECTING THE SHUNT AREA

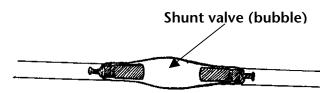
For infants only: To prevent skin breakdown over the shunt, keep your baby from resting his head on the shunt side for one month. Place your baby on his side with the side of the head that has the shunt turned up.

THINGS TO WATCH FOR

Watch for signs of intracranial (in-tra-KRAY-nee-al) pressure. Intracranial pressure occurs if the shunt is not working properly and fluid builds up inside the head.

The signs of intracranial pressure are:

- Change in your child's behavior, such as irritability (crankiness)
- Nausea (upset stomach)
- Vomiting (throwing up)
- Complaints of headache or stiff neck
- More sleepy than usual
- Staggering or swaying while walking
- Weakness on one side of the body
- Convulsions (seizures)
- Fever over 101°F rectally (in baby's bottom)
- Eye changes (crossed eyes, droopy eyelids, unequal pupils)
- Blurred or double vision
- Increased head size, especially if the child is under 18 months of age
- Tense (very firm) or bulging fontanel (soft spot) in a child under 18 months



Picture 1 The shunt.

Shunt
va

aphragm

Picture 2 The VP (Ventriculo-Peritoneal) shunt carries extra fluid to the abdomen to be absorbed.

CONSTIPATION

- The child with a VP shunt (a shunt that goes to the abdomen) must have regular bowel movements. Constipation (hard, rock-like stools) may cause the shunt to not work properly. Signs of intracranial pressure may develop.
- Your child must have a bowel movement every day or every other day. Please call your child's doctor if your child does not have regular bowel movements.
- Your child should have a healthy, balanced diet. Try increasing the fiber in the diet to avoid constipation.

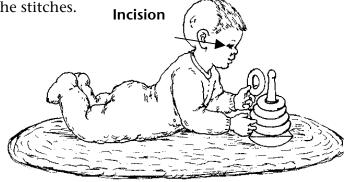
BATHING

Follow your doctor's instructions for care of the stitches.

You may give your child sponge baths daily.

ACTIVITY

Your child should be treated as a normal child and allowed to play as he usually does, except that he should not take part in contact sports (Picture 3). Avoid hitting, bumping or rubbing the incision until your child's check-up with doctor. Avoid tight head bands or hats that may put pressure on shunt.



Picture 3 Let your baby play normally.

WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR

Call your child's doctor if:

- You notice any of the signs that the shunt is not working (refer to signs of intracranial pressure listed on page 1).
- Sores, redness, or swelling appear over the shunt.
- You have any questions or concerns.

FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENT

- Your doctor will want to examine your child 1 or 2 weeks after leaving the hospital. It is important to keep this appointment and all future appointments.
- Please call your doctor's office for an appointment (phone)

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your doctor or nurse.