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URL of this page: <https://medlineplus.gov/hydrocephalus.html>

Hydrocephalus

Also called: Water on the brain

Hydrocephalus is the buildup of too much cerebrospinal fluid in the brain. Normally, this fluid cushions your brain. When you have too much, though, it puts harmful pressure on your brain.

Hydrocephalus can be congenital, or present at birth. Causes include genetic problems and problems with how the fetus develops. An unusually large head is the main sign of congenital hydrocephalus.

Hydrocephalus can also happen after birth. This is called acquired hydrocephalus. It can occur at any age. Causes can include head injuries, strokes, infections, tumors, and bleeding in the brain. Symptoms include:

- Headache
- Vomiting and nausea
- Blurry vision
- Balance problems
- Bladder control problems
- Thinking and memory problems

Hydrocephalus can permanently damage the brain, causing problems with physical and mental development. If untreated, it is usually fatal. With treatment, many people lead normal lives with few limitations. Treatment usually involves surgery to insert a shunt. A shunt is a flexible but sturdy plastic tube. The shunt moves the cerebrospinal fluid to another area of the body where it can be absorbed. Medicine and rehabilitation therapy can also help.

NIH: National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke

Start Here

- Hydrocephalus [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/hydrocephalus/symptoms-causes/syc-20373604?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/hydrocephalus/symptoms-causes/syc-20373604?p=1>]
- Hydrocephalus [<https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/disorders/hydrocephalus>]  (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke)

Diagnosis and Tests

- Brain MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/mri-brain>]  (American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/info/mri-brain>]
- Head CT [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/headct>]  (American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/info/headct>]
- Ultrasound: Head (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/ultrasound-head.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/ultrasound-head.html>]

Treatments and Therapies

- Hydrocephalus and Shunts [<https://www.spinabifidaassociation.org/resource/hydrocephalus-and-shunts/>] (Spina Bifida Association of America) -  PDF
Also in Spanish [<https://www.spinabifidaassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/SB-Latino-2015-Hydrocefalia-y-Derivaciones.pdf>]

Specifics

- Birth Disorders of the Brain and Spinal Cord [<https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/disorders/birth-disorders-brain-and-spinal-cord>]  (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke)

Genetics

- Dandy-Walker malformation: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/dandy-walker-malformation>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- L1 syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/l1-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Megalencephaly-polymicrogyria-polydactyly-hydrocephalus syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/megalencephaly-polymicrogyria-polydactyly-hydrocephalus-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)

Images

- Craniotomy - series [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100048_1.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp_presentations/100048_1.htm]
- Ventriculoperitoneal shunt - series [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100123_1.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp_presentations/100123_1.htm]

Statistics and Research

- 20 Powerful Facts about Hydrocephalus [<https://www.hydroassoc.org/powerful-hydrocephalus-facts/>] (Hydrocephalus Association)

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Hydrocephalus [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Hydrocephalus%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Retrospective analysis of neonatal hydrocephalus over the past 12 years. [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40739635>]
- Article: Free intraabdominal catheter management post-VP shunt disconnection in pediatric patients: systematic... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40694115>]
- Article: Complications and Outcome in Patients With Hydrocephalus Who Have Had a... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40689280>]
- Hydrocephalus -- see more articles [[https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Hydrocephalus%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22%5Bdat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+\]](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Hydrocephalus%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22%5Bdat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+)

Find an Expert

- Hydrocephalus Association [<https://www.hydroassoc.org/>]

Children

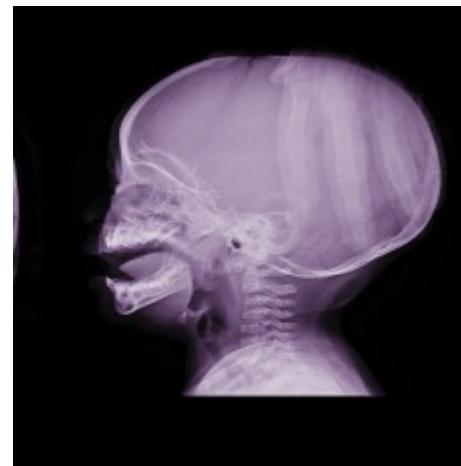
- Hydrocephalus (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/hydrocephalus.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/hydrocephalus.html>]
- Precocious Puberty [<https://www.spinabifidaassociation.org/resource/puberty/>] (Spina Bifida Association of America) - **PDF**

Older Adults

- Normal Pressure Hydrocephalus [<https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/what-is-dementia/types-of-dementia/normal-pressure-hydrocephalus>] (Alzheimer's Association)

Patient Handouts

- Brain surgery [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003018.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003018.htm>]
- Hydrocephalus [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001571.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001571.htm>]
- Normal pressure hydrocephalus [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000752.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000752.htm>]
- Ventriculoperitoneal shunt - discharge [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000149.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000149.htm>]
- Ventriculoperitoneal shunting [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003019.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003019.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

- Brain herniation [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001421.htm>]
- Brain surgery [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003018.htm>]
- Brain surgery - discharge [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000124.htm>]
- Cerebral spinal fluid (CSF) collection [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003428.htm>]
- Craniotomy - series [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100048_1.htm]
- Fontanelles - bulging [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003310.htm>]
- Head CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003786.htm>]
- Head MRI [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003791.htm>]
- Hydrocephalus [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001571.htm>]

Normal pressure hydrocephalus [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000752.htm>]

Radionuclide cisternogram [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003823.htm>]

Transillumination [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003389.htm>]

Ventriculoperitoneal shunt - discharge [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000149.htm>]

Ventriculoperitoneal shunt - series [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100123_1.htm]

Ventriculoperitoneal shunting [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003019.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Brain Malformations [<https://medlineplus.gov/brainmalformations.html>]

Chiari Malformation [<https://medlineplus.gov/chiarimalformation.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Hydrocephalus* is the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke [<http://www.ninds.nih.gov/>]

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