

Hydrocephalus

FACTS:

- Hydrocephalus occurs when the normal fluid in the brain cannot drain away into the bloodstream because the pathways are blocked. The fluid is still being made by the brain; so the build-up of fluid causes pressure to rise inside the brain, which can lead to damage.
- Hydrocephalus may occur in infancy or in older children and can be caused by a brain bleed (which may be the result of a premature birth), meningitis, cysts or brain tumors or other rare causes.
- Any child with rapid or abnormally large head growth should be seen by a doctor.
- Symptoms of hydrocephalus in infants include poor feeding, irritability, decreased activity and vomiting. Symptoms in older children include decreased mental activity, headaches (most frequently in the morning), neck pain, vomiting, (frequently in the morning), drowsiness, blurred or double vision, difficulty in walking and stunted physical and sexual growth.



Children with hydrocephalus are often chosen for adoption.



Any child with a larger head should be seen by a doctor.

Hydrocephalus



TREATMENT:

- **Medical treatment is always necessary. If an infant or child has any of the symptoms listed, they need to be seen by a doctor as soon as possible.**
- **Treatment usually includes surgery. The doctor will make a new pathway to drain off the excess fluid.**
- **Surgery normally involves placing a special tube called a shunt that redirects the extra fluid from the brain into other body cavities, such as the abdomen.**
- **Caregivers should be aware of all the signs and symptoms of increased pressure inside the brain to monitor a child post-surgery. Any child with a shunt should be watched closely for infection.**



Hydrocephalus is normally treated with surgery.



It is important to watch a child closely after surgery for infection.