

NOTE: Be sure to tell any health care provider caring for your child about your child's shunt.

Health care providers need to know your child has a shunt before:

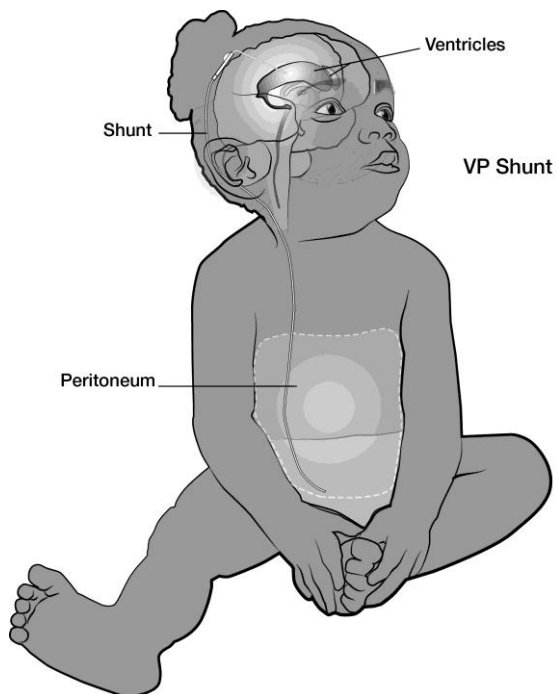
- Caring for your them.
- Doing X-rays or other tests.
- Doing any type of surgery.

What is a ventricular shunt?

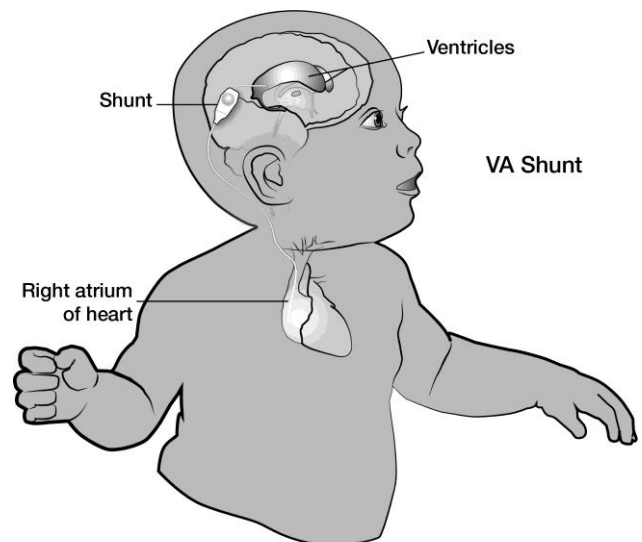
A ventricular shunt is a long, thin tube that drains extra fluid, called cerebrospinal fluid or CSF, out of the head. This helps to decrease pressure on the brain.

- A doctor will place the shunt during surgery.
- One end of the tube is placed in a fluid-filled chamber of the brain (the ventricle).
- The other end is placed in the chest or abdomen (stomach area).
- The shunt decreases pressure by draining CSF out of the ventricles into the chest or abdomen where it is reabsorbed by the body.

Ventriculoperitoneal (VP) shunt



Ventriculoatrial (VA) shunt



In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Ventricular shunt, continued

Why does my child need a shunt?

There are several conditions that can cause increased pressure on the brain. This includes hydrocephalus (too much CSF in the brain), infections or tumors. Talk with the care team to learn more about why your child needs a shunt.

What happens after the shunt is placed?

The doctor will talk with you about specific care for your child. Some guidelines for care include:

- Your child will have 1 incision (wound) on the head and 1 incision on the chest or abdomen.
 - Your child’s wounds may be closed with sutures (stitches) or staples.
 - You may need to put antibiotic ointment on the wound at home. Your child’s nurse can show you how to do this.
- **VERY IMPORTANT:** Keep the wounds clean. Bathe or shower your child and shampoo their hair as advised by the doctor. Rinse the hair well with clean water.
 - Be careful not to leave staples in water for a long time. Do not let them soak or go under water.
 - Wash your child’s hair as advised by the doctor. Do not scrub the area. Rinse using clean water.
- Follow the doctor’s directions about your child’s activity level. Avoid activity that requires a lot of energy or anything that could cause injury to the wounds.

Why do shunts need to be replaced (revised)?

Shunts can sometimes have problems, even with good care, and may need to be replaced during surgery.

The shunt can:

- Move or wear out as your child grows.
- Get blocked or broken.
- Get infected. This can be serious.

Be sure to follow the doctor’s directions for when to call them or when to take your child to the emergency department (ED).

What else do I need to know?

- Schedule a follow-up visit with your child’s doctor after going home from the hospital.
 - The doctor will tell you if your child needs certain tests during their visit.
 - Please tell the clinic staff about these tests when you call to schedule the visit.
- If you are given a staple or suture removal kit, please take it with you to the follow-up visit.

When should I call the doctor?

Call your child’s doctor **right away** if the wound:

- Begins to open or separate.

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Ventricular shunt, continued

- Drains fluid.
- Gets swollen, red or hot to touch.

Also call the doctor **right away** if your child:

- Has any swelling or redness of the skin over the path of the shunt tubing.
- Is more irritable (fussy) than normal.
- Has any nausea and vomiting (throwing up) without diarrhea.
- Seems confused.
- Has a fever of 101°F or higher (or as advised by your child’s doctor).
- Complains of headaches or a stiff neck.
- Has vision changes.
- Is unable to look up or side-to-side.
- Has a constant downward gaze with their eyes.
- Has trouble waking up or staying awake.
- Has a change in behavior or school grades.
- Has new seizures or changes in seizure activity.
- Has any “soft spot” on their head that is full and tense when your child is quietly resting.

Call the doctor if you have questions or concerns about how your child looks or feels.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child’s doctor or a member of your child’s healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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