

WHAT IS HYDROCEPHALUS?

Hydrocephalus is most common in infants and adults aged 60 and older.

Hydrocephalus is a neurological condition characterized by the abnormal buildup of cerebrospinal fluid in the ventricles of the brain. This excess fluid causes the ventricles to enlarge, resulting in harmful pressure on the brain tissue. This pressure can cause a range of symptoms related to brain function, and if left untreated, can become fatal.

01 | Causes

Hydrocephalus, caused by an imbalance between the production and absorption of cerebrospinal fluid, can be either congenital or acquired. Some common causes of congenital hydrocephalus include:

- Spina bifida
- Complications of premature birth
- Infections during pregnancy, such as rubella, that cause inflammation in fetal brain tissue.

For acquired hydrocephalus, the most common causes are:

- Head trauma
- Meningitis
- Brain or spinal cord tumors

02 | Symptoms

Symptoms of hydrocephalus vary with age and disease progression.

Infants:

- Unusually large head
- Bulging soft spot on top of the head
- Sun-setting eyes
- Sleepiness

Children and Adolescents:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Balance and gait abnormalities
- Slowing or loss of developmental progress
- Changes in personality

Adults

- Lethargy
- Bladder incontinence
- Impaired vision
- Memory loss or mild dementia

03 | Treatment

Hydrocephalus is treated with either shunt surgery or neuroendoscopy. During shunt surgery, a shunt is implanted in the brain, allowing cerebrospinal fluid to flow through the shunt into another part of the body where it can be absorbed into the bloodstream. During neuroendoscopy, the surgeon makes a hole in the bottom of a ventricle for cerebrospinal fluid to flow out of the brain.

For more information on hydrocephalus and supportive resources, please visit www.hydroassoc.org.

Did You Know?

Hydrocephalus affects approximately 1 to 2 in every 1,000 children born in the U.S.

References

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hydrocephalus/>

<https://www.aans.org/patients/conditions-treatments/hydrocephalus/>

<https://www.hydroassoc.org/about-hydrocephalus/>

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/17334-hydrocephalus#management-and-treatment>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseasesconditions/hydrocephalus/symptoms-causes/syc-20373604>