



Patient & Family Guide  
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# Ventricular Drain



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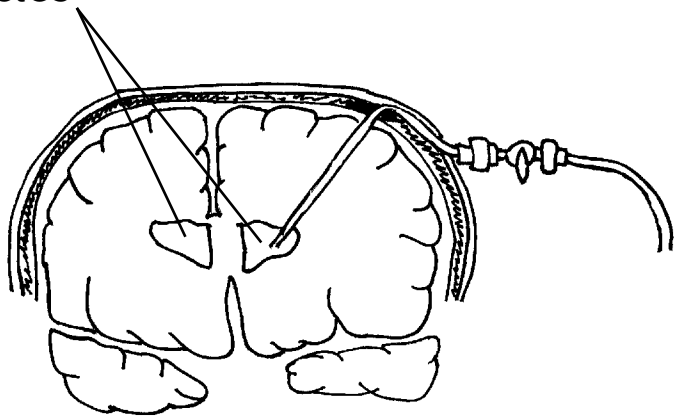
# Ventricular Drain

This pamphlet is about a ventricular drain and why it may be needed. The doctor will decide if you need a ventricular drain. The nurses and doctors will explain the use of the drain to you. Feel free to ask us questions about any part of your care.

## Why is a ventricular drain used?

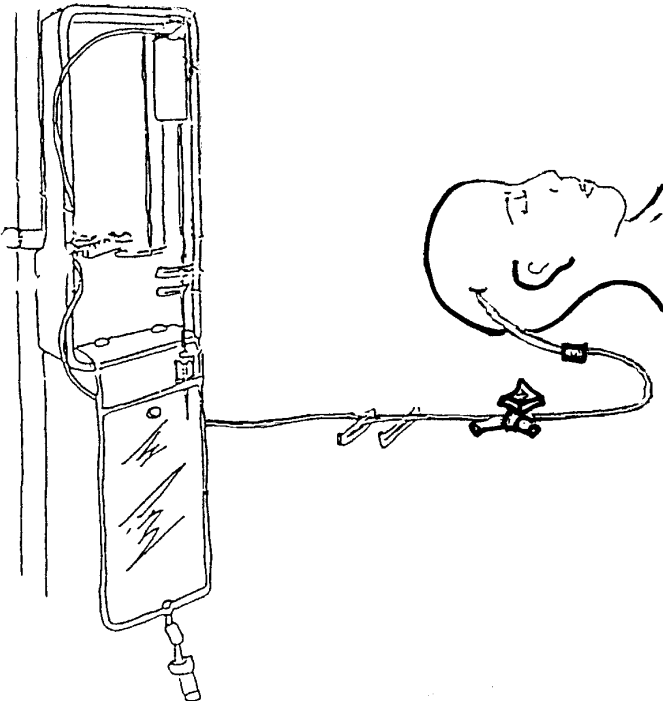
Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) is a clear, colourless fluid that cushions the brain and spinal cord to protect them from injury. As new fluid is made, the old fluid is absorbed. A drain may be inserted to measure the pressure inside your head or to help with a blockage of the flow of CSF. Draining CSF lowers the pressure inside your head.

**ventricles**



## How is the drain inserted?

- The drain will be put in by a doctor, with help from a nurse.
- A section of your hair will have to be cut and your scalp will be shaved.
- The area will be frozen with a local anesthetic.
- A small incision (cut) will be made in the skin and a small opening made in the skull bone.
- The drain will be inserted into this area and connected to a drainage system.
- There will be stitches where the drain enters the head.
- A clear dressing will cover the area.



## **What happens when the drain is in place?**

- The nurses in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and the Intermediate Care Unit (IMCU) have special training in taking care of this type of drain. Please ask the nurse if you have any questions.
- Please do not adjust the head of your bed. The position of the drain is measured to a level at your ear.
- Your nurse will be checking the drain and taking measurements. A sample of CSF may be taken to test for signs of infection.
- There will be CSF in the drainage system. The fluid may be clear, yellowish, or bloody. This is normal.
- While the drain is in place, you will likely stay on bedrest.

Sometimes the doctor may allow the drain to be clamped for a very short time when you are moved to a chair.

## **How is the drain taken out?**

- When you are well enough, the doctor will take the drain out.
- After the dressing is taken off, the stitches holding the drain will be taken out. This should not cause any discomfort. The drain will then be removed.
- A stitch will be used to close the opening in the scalp.
- A small dressing will be placed over the area.
- The area will be checked by the nurse. If the area feels wet, tell the nurse. Sometimes, a small amount of CSF may leak from the site. If this happens, the doctor may use more stitches.

## What are the risks of this drain?

### The risks of this drain are:

- › Meningitis (inflammation and infection).  
If your doctor thinks you may have an infection, you may need antibiotics.
- › Bleeding.
- › Stroke.
- › Leakage of CSF.
- › Death.

We know that this is a stressful time for you and your loved ones. This may make it hard to remember things. We want to help you understand all parts of your care.

If you would like us to go over this information with you at any time, please ask.

