

HYDROCEPHALUS

What is Hydrocephalus?

- A condition where cerebrospinal fluid builds up in the brain:
 - The build-up of fluid expands and puts pressure on other brain tissue
 - It can be present at birth or acquired later in life
 - Can be caused by inherited genetic or developmental disorders
 - Other causes are traumatic brain injuries, tumors, meningitis, or premature birth complications
- Hydrocephalus can be treated by a medical doctor. A shunt can be placed to redirect the flow of cerebrospinal fluid.

How Does Hydrocephalus Affect Communication?

- Can cause delays in physical and cognitive development if untreated and can lead to death.
- Potential speech delays
- Expressive language (spoken) is stronger than receptive language (understanding spoken language).
- The child may repeat themselves often
- Difficulty with figurative language
- Their speech may lack content (important parts of language to convey a message)

Signs and Symptoms

Young children:
Unusually large head, irritability, seizures, rapid change in head size, downward deviation of eyes, vomiting, and sleepiness

Signs and Symptoms

Older children:
Blurred vision, balance and gait disturbances, incontinence, headaches and vomiting, change in personality



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Role of the Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP)

- No specific treatment outline for hydrocephalus
- Address difficulties related to speech, language, and cognition
- Provide compensatory strategies to help with daily activities
- Focus on helping the child function in school to meet educational and social needs
- Work on a team with the family and a variety of professionals to include teachers, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and behavioral aides

Educational Difficulties

- Some children have a nonverbal learning disorder (difficulty understanding nonlinguistic and nonverbal information)
- Poor writing skills
- Organizational issues and following multistep directions
- Visual memory issues as well as difficulty recalling information

Communication Difficulties

- Can be unpredictable
- Potential speech delays
- Trouble understanding:
 - Spatial relations (standing too close to peers)
 - Nonverbal language (facial expressions)
 - Abstract and complex topics
 - Social interactions and judgements

For more information about hydrocephalus, please visit:

Pediatric Hydrocephalus Foundation: www.hydrocephaluskids.org

National Hydrocephalus Foundation: www.nhfonline.org



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