Intraventricular hemorrhage (Infant)

PATIENT INFORMATION

Intraventricular hemorrhage, called IVH, is bleeding, as a result of injury, into the small chambers of the center of the brain, where cerebrospinal fluid is made. These small chambers are called the ventricles of the brain.

Causes of intraventricular hemorrhage (IVH)
Premature infants less than 32 weeks gestation are very likely to have IVH. Their brain development is immature and fragile. Injury to the brain caused by too little oxygen and too little blood flow, the pressure to the baby’s head during delivery, or abrupt changes in blood pressure can cause bleeding into the ventricles.

Symptoms of intraventricular hemorrhage (IVH)
Some babies with IVH have no symptoms at all. Other babies show the following:
• Uneven breathing, called apnea
• Decrease in heart rate, called bradycardia
• Seizures
• Decreased activity, called lethargy
• Temperature that changes up and down
• Sudden changes in blood sugar
• Bulging soft spot, called the fontanel, on the top of the head

How is intraventricular hemorrhage (IVH) diagnosed?
The diagnosis is made by ultrasound, using a machine like an x-ray which passes sound waves over the baby’s soft spot. On a screen, the doctor can see through these sound waves the area of the brain where bleeding might have occurred. Because ultrasound does not cause any pain, the baby will not have any pain medicine. Ultrasound can be done at the baby’s bedside.

Occasionally, another kind of x-ray called a CT scan is done. A CT scan is a computerized x-ray that takes cross-section pictures of the body.

Treatment for intraventricular hemorrhage (IVH)
The treatment for IVH depends on how severe the bleeding is. Minor bleeds may not require any treatment, and the blood is sometimes re-absorbed by the body. The baby may have to have extra fluid drained by several spinal taps. If the tissues that re-absorb spinal fluid become irritated or scarred, spinal fluid might cause a condition known as hydrocephalus. Your baby’s doctor will tell you if your baby develops hydrocephalus.

Your baby’s future
It is very important that a pediatrician sees your baby frequently to make sure that the baby is developing normally. It is much better to treat any problems early. Be sure to keep appointments with your pediatrician.