VA Shunt
HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS FOR PARENTS

Your child’s shunt has a valve or pump that looks like a small lump under the scalp above the ear. This pump regulates the flow of spinal fluid. It usually does not show when the hair grows back. It is OK for your child to lie on the side where the shunt is located, but teach your child not to play with the pump or push on the pump. Attached to either end of the pump is a tube. One piece of tubing goes into the fluid filled space in their brain (the ventricle) and the other tube goes into the right atrium of the heart where the spinal fluid drains into the bloodstream. This is a ventriculooatrial (VA) shunt.

Medicines
Since part of the shunt tubing is in the blood, there is a risk that some of the clotting substances normally found in the bloodstream might stick to the tubing. To prevent this, your neurosurgeon will probably tell you to give your child an aspirin at least once a day. Please check with your neurosurgeon if you have questions about this. If your child is going to have any dental work or other surgical procedures, he or she will need to take antibiotics to prevent infection. The neurosurgeon or nurse will give you the guidelines.

The incision
The dressing can come off the day after you go home. Please see the Incision Care sheet from the Department of Neurosurgery for instructions on caring for the incision.

Nutrition
A well-balanced diet is necessary for proper healing. This includes food from each of the basic food groups.

Activity
Your child may go back to normal activities unless otherwise directed by your neurosurgeon, but no rough playing, skating, bike riding, or other activities for at least 6 weeks that could cause hitting the head. No swimming for at least three weeks. Your child may go back to these activities after the follow-up visit with the neurosurgeon, but rough team sports such as soccer, football, basketball or hockey are not recommended.

School
Your child may return to school in about two weeks when the stitches dissolve or any staples are removed. However, no PE activities for 6 to 8 weeks after the surgery. Ask your doctor or nurse for a note.

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Call your doctor if your child has...
• redness, drainage or swelling of the incision or the area around the shunt
• fever of 101.5°F or greater
• vomiting or nausea that won’t stop
• seizure activity
• bulging or full soft spot (if your child’s soft spot is still open)
• increased sleepiness
• increased bruising or cuts that bleed for a long time
• if you have any other questions concerning your child’s shunt

Phone number for your neurosurgeon’s office __________________________