

# Ventriculostomy

## Ventriculostomy

A ventriculostomy is a catheter that a neurosurgeon (doctor performing the procedure) will insert into the ventricle, or chamber in the brain. This will drain the excess cerebrospinal fluid, (CSF) measure the intracranial pressure (pressure within the brain), or both.

## How Does it Work?

- A ventriculostomy is used with a closed drainage system that uses gravity to drain fluid from the brain. A ventriculostomy may also be attached to an ultrasound wand (also called a transducer) and a monitor. This will display the patients pressure within the brain.
- When a neurosurgeon inserts the ventriculostomy into the patient's ventricle (chamber in the brain), the catheter will be attached to a collecting bag to collect the excess fluid (CSF).

The amount of fluid drained from the patient can be controlled by the height of the collecting bag. This will be determined by the neurosurgeon. A stopcock (clamp) will be used to close or open the drainage line.

- The nurse will position the patient and the patient's head at the appropriate level. This will allow for enough fluid to be drained. This is referred to as "leveling." The nurses will often use a leveling stick make sure the patient is in the correct position or alignment with drainage system.

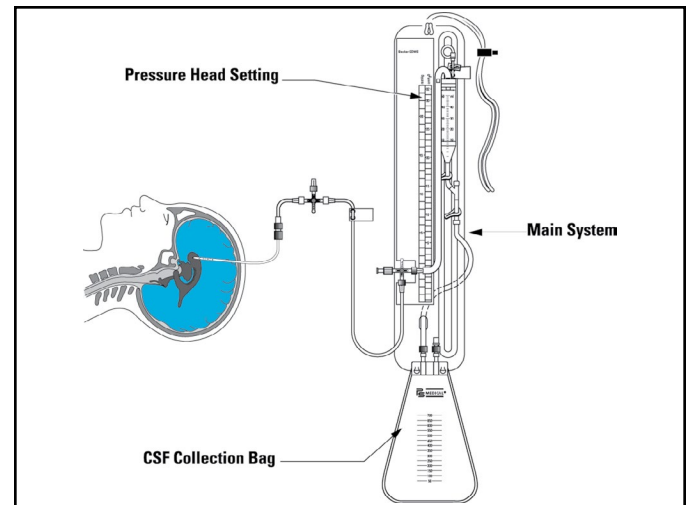


Photo used with permission from Medtronic Neurosurgery

- When the patient needs to be repositioned or moved (for example, from lying down to sitting up, or simply moving the head of the bed up and down), the nurse will clamp the drainage line. He or she will turn the stopcock (clamp) to the off position to close the drainage line.

This will prevent a sudden draining or releasing too much fluid too fast. A sudden change in the volume of fluid can cause the pressure to change within the brain. Once the patient is repositioned, the drain level is appropriately adjusted and opened to drain.

## What Should You Know?

You can help your loved one who has a ventriculostomy by:

- not moving the patient on your own.  
Ask the nurse to help you. He or she can make sure that the patient will be positioned correctly and in alignment with the drainage system.
- keeping the patient's room quiet.  
The TV should be turned off and the lights dimmed or off.
- keeping the conversation light and short.  
If you have a large family or many friends and visitors, ask the nurse if a schedule can be worked out to allow enough time for everyone who wishes to see the patient.