



Hydrocephalus
Association

Hydrocephalus Fact Sheet

- ✓ Hydrocephalus is an abnormal accumulation of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) within the cavities of the brain (called ventricles).
- ✓ Hydrocephalus affects a wide range of people from infants and children to young, middle aged and older adults.
- ✓ There is no known cure.
- ✓ One to two of every 1,000 babies are born with hydrocephalus, making it as common as Down Syndrome and more common than Spina Bifida or brain tumors.
- ✓ Hydrocephalus is the **most common reason** for brain surgery in children.
- ✓ Two-thirds of our military service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with moderate to severe Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) are likely to also have hydrocephalus.
- ✓ Hydrocephalus is treated by doing brain surgery to insert a shunt to drain the CSF into another part of the body (usually the abdomen) where it can be absorbed.
- ✓ Originally invented over 50 years ago, shunts have the highest failure rate of any medically implanted device. An estimated 50 percent of shunts fail within the first two years.
- ✓ One quarter of a million Americans may have Normal Pressure Hydrocephalus (NPH), which is most common in older adults and seniors.
- ✓ Without appropriate diagnostic testing, NPH is often misdiagnosed as Alzheimer's or Parkinson's diseases.
- ✓ Research suggests that treating NPH in the elderly population would reduce U.S. health care expenditures by \$25,000 per patient, or \$184 million, over five years.
- ✓ The medical costs for hydrocephalus are over \$1 billion per year, yet the National Institutes of Health (NIH) invests less than \$1 million per year in hydrocephalus treatment.
- ✓ Over the last 50 years, there has been no significant improvement in hydrocephalus treatment and no progress toward prevention or cure.

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