

Shunt Malfunction

(A guide to symptoms and suggested action for schools)

One of a series of fact sheets produced by the Family Support Service

Signs of acute shunt malfunction or blockage may include:

- Vomiting or nausea
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Photophobia (sensitivity to light) + other visual disturbances
- Drowsiness
- Fits

If a child with a shunt (or who has had hydrocephalus treated by third ventriculostomy) displays all or some of the above:

1. Inform parents
2. If parents are unavailable, ask child for his/her shunt alert card if they have one and look for name of Neurosurgeon. Phone Neurosurgical Unit and speak to Ward Sister or Neurosurgical Registrar. Do NOT leave message with ward clerk or junior.
3. It may be necessary to arrange transport to Neurosurgical Unit. Do NOT allow child to be transported to local district hospital (unless unconscious or very ill).

A CHILD WITH SHUNT BLOCKAGE (OR MALFUNCTION OF THIRD VENTRICULOSTOMY) NEEDS TO BE SEEN AT A SPECIALIST NEUROSURGICAL UNIT WITHIN 4 HOURS OF ACUTE SYMPTOMS DEVELOPING.

Shunt malfunction may present as a chronic condition (ie over some time - weeks or even months).

If a child with hydrocephalus presents with:

- Fatigue
- General Malaise
- Visuo-perceptual problems
- Behaviour Changes
- Decline in academic performance
- Being just "not right"

THE PARENTS NEED TO BE INFORMED: Do not assume that someone else will tell them or that they will necessarily notice "vague" symptoms.

All children with hydrocephalus need to be well hydrated and have access to clear fluids (not fizzy juice or any drink containing caffeine) especially in hot weather or after exercise.

If you have any questions or would like further information, please do not hesitate to contact the Family Support Workers at:

Scottish Spina Bifida Association - Family Support Service

Address: The Dan Young Building, 6 Craighalbert Way, Cumbernauld, G68 0LS • Tel: 01236 794516 • Fax: 01236 736435

Lo-Call Helpline: 08459 11 11 12 • E-mail: familysupport@ssba.org.uk • Web: www.ssba.org.uk

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