When a child with hydrocephalus joins a school, the school will need to ascertain what action should be taken in the event that the child has a problem that could be related to his/her hydrocephalus and the parents are unavailable. The preferences of neurosurgeons vary with each hospital unit – some like the child to be transported direct to the neurosurgical unit, others prefer the child to be assessed at a local A&E department first.

Signs of acute shunt malfunction or blockage may include:

- vomiting or nausea
- photophobia (sensitivity to light) + other visual disturbances
- drowsiness
- headache
- abdominal pain
- seizures (fits)
- dizziness

If a child with a shunt (or who has had hydrocephalus treated by 3rd ventriculostomy) displays all or some of the above **THINK SHUNT**
ACTION

1) Inform parents

2) If parents are unavailable ask child for his/her shunt alert card & look for name of neurosurgeon. Phone neurosurgical unit & speak to Ward Sister or Neurosurgical Registrar. Please do NOT leave message with ward clerk or junior

3) It may be necessary to arrange transport to a neurosurgical unit. In some areas, the policy is for the child to be assessed at a local hospital.

IF A CHILD DEVELOPS SYMPTOMS OF A SHUNT BLOCKAGE (OR MALFUNCTION OF 3RD VENTRICULOLOSTOMY) YOU NEED TO CONTACT THEIR SPECIALIST NEUROSURGICAL UNIT WITHIN 4 HOURS OF ACUTE SYMPTOMS DEVELOPING, FOR ADVICE
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**
- **being just ‘not right’**
- **behaviour changes**
- **decline in academic performance**

**THE PARENTS NEED TO BE INFORMED**

Do not assume that someone else will tell them or that they will necessarily notice “vague” symptoms.

It is especially important that children with hydrocephalus have access to clear fluids particularly if the weather is hot, the classroom is overheated, or after exercise. Clear fluids can include water or squash, but not ‘coke’ or any drink containing caffeine.
Help us

Shine relies on people’s generosity and support so we can help our clients who depend on us for help and advice - people with hydrocephalus, spina bifida, their families and carers. To donate to Shine please visit www.shinecharity.org.uk or call 01733 421329.

This information has been produced by Shine’s medical advisers and approved by Shine’s Medical Advisory Committee of senior medical professionals.

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