

# Hydrocephalus: A Simple Guide for Patients and Families

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## What Is Hydrocephalus?

Hydrocephalus is a condition where there is a build-up of fluid inside the brain. This fluid is called cerebrospinal fluid (often shortened to “CSF”), and it normally flows around the brain and spinal cord to protect them, provide nutrients, and remove waste.

Think of this fluid like a gentle cushion and cleaning system for your brain.

In hydrocephalus, this fluid does not flow properly. It may be:

- Blocked somewhere along its pathway
- Not absorbed properly
- Produced in a way that overwhelms the system

When this happens, the fluid builds up and increases pressure inside the skull. Because the skull is a closed space, this pressure can affect how the brain functions.

Hydrocephalus can occur in:

- Babies and children
- Adults
- Older individuals

It can develop suddenly or slowly over time. In some people, it is present from birth. In others, it happens later due to conditions such as:

- Brain tumours
- Bleeding in the brain
- Infections
- Head injury

The important thing to understand is this:

👉 Hydrocephalus is treatable, especially when diagnosed early.

## Symptoms to Watch For

The symptoms of hydrocephalus can vary depending on age and how quickly the condition develops.

### In Adults

Adults often experience symptoms that are subtle at first and gradually worsen.

You may notice:

- Persistent or worsening headaches
- Nausea or vomiting
- Blurred or double vision
- Difficulty with balance or walking

- Feeling unsteady or “off balance”
- Memory problems or confusion
- Slower thinking or difficulty concentrating
- Excessive sleepiness or fatigue

Some patients describe it as:

“I just don’t feel like myself anymore.”

### **In Older Adults**

In older individuals, hydrocephalus can sometimes be mistaken for ageing or conditions like dementia.

Common signs include:

- Difficulty walking (short, shuffling steps)
- Frequent falls
- Memory decline
- Loss of bladder control

These symptoms often appear together and can significantly affect independence.

### **In Children and Infants**

In babies and young children, symptoms may include:

- An unusually large head size
- Rapid increase in head circumference
- Bulging soft spot on the head
- Irritability or excessive crying
- Poor feeding
- Vomiting
- Developmental delay

Older children may complain of:

- Headaches
- Vision problems
- Difficulty in school
- Poor coordination

### **When Should You See a Neurosurgeon?**

This is one of the most important questions.

Many symptoms of hydrocephalus can look like common problems — headaches, dizziness, or memory issues. But when they persist or worsen, they should not be ignored.

#### **You should seek medical attention early if you notice:**

- Headaches that are worsening or persistent
- New problems with balance or walking

- Memory changes or confusion
- Unexplained nausea or vomiting
- Vision problems
- Frequent falls
- Loss of bladder control without a clear cause

**Seek urgent evaluation if:**

- Symptoms are rapidly worsening
- There is drowsiness or difficulty staying awake
- There is sudden confusion
- Walking becomes difficult or unsafe

For parents:

- Any concern about a baby's head size or development should be checked early
- Delayed milestones or unusual behaviour should not be ignored

👉 Early evaluation can make a significant difference.

Hydrocephalus is one of those conditions where timely diagnosis can prevent long-term problems and improve quality of life.

**How Is Hydrocephalus Treated?**

The good news is that hydrocephalus is a condition that can be effectively treated.

The goal of treatment is simple:

👉 To restore normal fluid flow and relieve pressure on the brain.

There are two main approaches.

**1. Shunt Surgery (Most Common Treatment)**

A shunt is a small, flexible tube that diverts excess fluid from the brain to another part of the body, usually the abdomen, where it can be safely absorbed.

Think of it as a drainage system that helps regulate fluid levels.

The procedure involves:

- Placing a thin tube into the fluid spaces in the brain
- Connecting it to a valve that controls flow
- Directing the fluid to another area of the body

This system works continuously to keep pressure under control.

Patients often experience:

- Improvement in headaches
- Better balance
- Clearer thinking

- Improved daily functioning

## **2. Endoscopic Third Ventriculostomy (ETV)**

This is a minimally invasive procedure that creates a new pathway for the fluid to flow inside the brain.

Instead of placing a tube, a small opening is made to allow the fluid to bypass the blockage.

Benefits may include:

- No implanted device
- More natural fluid circulation
- Shorter recovery in suitable patients

Not everyone is suitable for this procedure, and careful assessment is required.

### **What Happens After Treatment?**

Recovery depends on:

- The cause of hydrocephalus
- How long symptoms were present
- Overall health

Many patients notice improvement soon after treatment, especially in:

- Headaches
- Walking
- Alertness

However, some symptoms may take time to improve.

Regular follow-up is important to:

- Monitor progress
- Ensure the treatment is working well
- Adjust care if needed

### **Living With Hydrocephalus**

Many people with hydrocephalus go on to live full, active lives.

With proper treatment and follow-up:

- Daily activities can return to normal
- Independence can be maintained
- Quality of life can improve significantly

The key is ongoing care and awareness of symptoms.

### **Why Choose a Specialist Neurosurgeon?**

Hydrocephalus is not just about “extra fluid.”  
It requires careful diagnosis, precise treatment, and long-term care.

Choosing the right specialist matters.

As a neurosurgeon, my role is to:

- Identify the exact cause of the condition
- Determine the most suitable treatment
- Perform surgery safely and effectively
- Guide you through recovery and follow-up

Each patient is different.  
There is no “one-size-fits-all” approach.

In my practice, I focus on:

- Clear explanations so you understand your condition
- Safe and modern surgical techniques
- Personalised treatment plans
- Ongoing support for you and your family

Most importantly:

👉 I understand that this is a worrying time for you.

My goal is not just to treat the condition—but to help you feel reassured, informed, and confident in your care.

Hearing the word “brain condition” can be frightening.

But hydrocephalus is one of the conditions where:

- Treatment is well established
- Outcomes can be very positive
- Symptoms can improve significantly

The earlier it is identified and treated, the better the results.

## **Take the Next Step**

If you or your loved one is experiencing symptoms that could be related to hydrocephalus, do not wait for things to worsen.

A simple evaluation can provide clarity—and peace of mind.

👉 **Book a consultation today**

**Let’s assess your symptoms, answer your concerns, and guide you toward the right treatment.**

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**Your health, your clarity, your confidence—starts with the right step.**