

SIGNS OF A SHUNT COMPLICATION

IN BABIES & CHILDREN

Shunt malfunction

Shunts can malfunction over time, often as a result of a blockage of the shunt tubing, fracture/disconnection of the tubing, or over-drainage.

Signs of a shunt malfunction are the same as signs of hydrocephalus, and include:

- A tense or bulging fontanelle (soft spot) on top of the head (in babies)
- A large head (in babies/toddlers)
- Nausea and vomiting
- Headache
- Sleepiness
- Poor feeding
- Irritability
- Changes in vision
- Prominent scalp veins
- Problems with movement, balance or coordination
- Changes in personality or behaviour
- Decline in school or nursery performance
- Seizures
- Feeling the child is "just not quite right"
- Eyes that are fixed looking downwards (called sun-setting eyes)

If your child experiences any symptoms of a shunt malfunction, or infection, you should seek immediate medical attention. Many children will require surgery to replace the shunt. Children with an infection may require antibiotics.

Shunt infection

Shunt infections can occur following shunt surgery, and often happen within the first few weeks after the procedure.

Signs of a shunt infection can include:

- A high temperature (38°C or more)
- Redness and tenderness along the length of the shunt or incision site
- Abdominal (tummy) pain
- Feeling sick, loss of appetite
- A stiff neck
- Headache



www.nhs.uk/conditions/hydrocephalus/
www.harrys-hat.org