WHAT IS A SHUNT?

A SHUNT is a plastic tube with a valve in the middle that carries the fluid from where it is building up to another place for it to be absorbed.

WHY DO YOU NEED A SHUNT INSERTED?

The fluid filled cavities in the middle of the brain (ventricles) produce a fluid called cerebrospinal fluid (C.S.F.). This washes the brain and the brain floats in it. The C.S.F. is normally absorbed after it travels through the middle of the brain and over the surface of the brain. If it is not absorbed it still gets produced and the pressure builds up inside the head and the ventricles get bigger. This is called hydrocephalus (water on the brain).

WHAT IS A VENTRICULO-PERITONEAL (V.P.) SHUNT?

The lining around the bowel in the abdomen (peritoneum) is covered with a membrane that will absorb fluid. In a V.P. shunt the tubing runs from the ventricle to the peritoneum under the skin. The valve that controls the pressure usually sits as a small bump under the skin behind the right ear. The tubing and the valve are able to be felt under the skin but not usually seen.

WHAT YOU NEED TO TELL THE DOCTOR BEFORE SURGERY?

- If you have clotting problems.
- Any recent new Health problems.
- If you are taking blood thining agents, for example, Warfarin/aspirin/anti-inflammatory Drug or other allergies

HOW IS IT PERFORMED?

In the operating theatre you are given a general anaesthetic. The area of the incision on the head and abdomen is then shaved and prepared with anti-septic. You are covered in drapes so that only the incisions and the area between can be seen. Local anaesthetic is injected and then the skin is cut. A hole in the bone of the skull is drilled down to the dura. The incision in the abdomen is opened and we dissect down to the space around the bowel (peritoneal space). A tube is tunnelled under the skin between the two incisions.

A small hole is made in the dura and brain and we push a blunt catheter through the brain down to the ventricles. The catheter to the abdomen is fed down the tube. The two catheters are then connected to the valve. Once inserted all bleeding is stopped. Everything is then repositioned the way we found it. The valve is sutured to stop it moving. The skin is then closed either with nylon suture or with special staples.
YOU WILL BE ASKED TO SIGN A CONSENT FORM TO SAY THAT YOU UNDERSTAND THE RISKS. IF YOU ARE NOT SURE ASK BEFORE YOU SIGN.

IF YOU THINK YOUR SHUNT IS BLOCKED YOU MUST CONTACT YOUR SURGEON OR HOSPITAL URGENTLY.

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