August 2018

# Health Trends

Virginia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services

Office Integrated Health

## Featured Health Alert

*Shunt Safety*

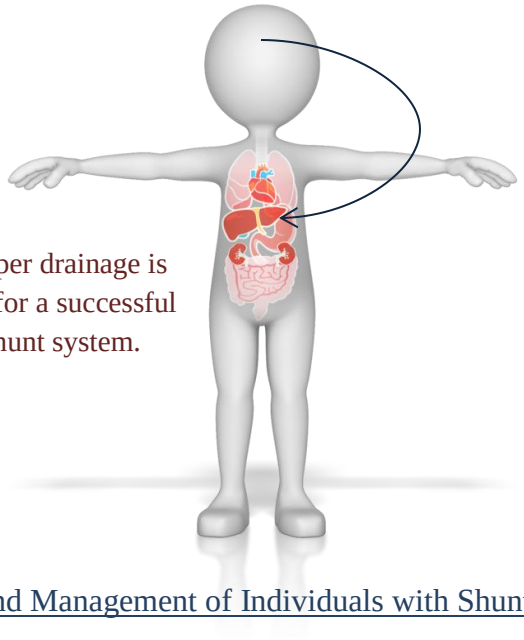
Sometimes individuals with disabilities require the use of a shunt to regulate the fluid in their brain. A shunt is a long, flexible, plastic tube that drains fluid from the brain to another body compartment, commonly the peritoneum or the abdomen. Shunts are needed primarily for the treatment for hydrocephalus which is the buildup of excess cerebrospinal fluid in the ventricles of the brain. Ventricles house fluid in the brain, when there is more fluid than the ventricles can handle, swelling occurs.[1]

Cerebral shunts (also called brain shunts) carry potential hazards and should be carefully monitored. Sometimes, a shunt can develop clogs and malfunctions. If the shunt is malfunctioning, it will not drain the cerebrospinal fluid and can cause an increase in brain pressure. Identifying shunt malfunction quickly is important because shunt failure can result in permanent neurological damage or death.[2]

### Signs of shunt problems or shunt malfunction

- headaches
- seizures
- irritability
- excessive sleepiness
- incontinence
- poor appetite
- memory loss
- poor coordination
- impaired vision

**These signs and symptoms could be a medical emergency, follow your written protocols and speak with a medical professional if you have questions or concerns.**



Proper drainage is key for a successful shunt system.

### Care and Management of Individuals with Shunts

- Wash hands before and after touching the shunt site.
- Monitor the skin integrity over the shunt site to ensure the skin is undamaged - look for areas of skin breakdown/damage on the head and along the shunt site.
- Monitor vital signs and report fevers per individual protocol.
- Report changes in behavior like lethargy, drowsiness, irritability, or confusion
- Monitor the individual's intake of food for a decrease in appetite
- Be aware of
  - sudden change in vision
  - sudden change in gait or movement
  - excessive vomiting.
- Most importantly, monitor for fluid leaks from the site where the shunt is inserted.[3]

*For more health and safety alerts, please visit our website at www.dbhds.virginia.gov*

[1]Ventriculoperitoneal Shunts. (n.d.). Retrieved July 24, 2018, from https://pedclerk.bsd.uchicago.edu/page/ventriculoperitoneal-shunts
[2]MedlinePlus Medical Encyclopedia. (n.d.). Ventriculoperitoneal shunt - discharge. Retrieved July 24, 2018, from https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000149.htm
[3]Adams, DM. (2015). Overview of Shunts and Their Potential Hazards. Retrieved July 24, 2018, from http://23.29.59.143/library/oih/health%20and%20safety%20alerts/updated%20alerts/overview%20of%20shunts.pdf

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## August is Gastroparesis Awareness Month

Individuals with developmental delays, seizure disorders, or cerebral palsy may experience gastroparesis.[4] Gastroparesis is a condition that affects the normal spontaneous movement of the muscles (motility) in an individual's stomach, preventing the stomach from emptying correctly and leading to severe issues.

When gastroparesis occurs, individuals may experience feeling full shortly after a meal and intense stomach pains, along with nausea and vomiting.[5] This puts individuals at an increased risk for aspiration as well. It is important to monitor an individual's eating habits and speak to a medical professional if a concern arises.

Treatment options for gastroparesis may begin with diet management. A dietitian can assist in reviewing foods which may be less irritating to the stomach like soft, pureed foods. Other interventions include medication to stimulate the stomach muscles or surgical intervention such as the placement of a feeding tube, a jejunostomy tube, which allows food to bypass the stomach.[5]

***Interested in learning more? Visit https://aboutgastroparesis.org***

[4]Saliakellis, E., & Fotoulaki, M. (2013). Gastroparesis in children. Retrieved August 2, 2018, from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3959432/
[5]Gastroparesis. (2018). Retrieved August 2, 2018, from https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/gastroparesis/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20355792

## Safety Reminder

*Catheter Care*

Performing tasks such as caring for an indwelling urinary catheter requires training along with an eye for cleanliness. Take a moment to review your provider's policies and protocols to ensure ongoing safety and care. Be sure to discuss with your medical professional if you have questions regarding your protocols. Some catheter care guidelines may include the following.

- Wash your hands with soap and water. Be sure to clean between fingers and under nails.
- Wet a washcloth with warm water and soap.
- Gently hold the catheter and begin washing the tubing near the vagina or penis. Move slowly down the catheter (away from the body) to clean the tubing. Do not clean from the bottom of the catheter toward the body.
- Gently dry the tubing with the second clean towel.
- Attach the catheter in accordance to the individual's protocol.[6]

[6]MedlinePlus Medical Encyclopedia. (2017). Indwelling catheter care. Retrieved July 24, 2018, from https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000140.htm

## Office of Integrated Health

*Team Highlight*

It is a part of the mission of the Office of Integrated Heath to educate community providers about the importance and utility of nurses as an adjunct to care within the person-centered supports structure.

Registered Nurse Care Consultants (RNCCs) are critical to a strong health support network infrastructure. By providing support to case managers, families, and providers, the RNCC's assist in improving the way care is being delivered.

RNCC's are able to assist with community education, health service coordination, policy review, cost reduction strategies, and more.

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