

UW MEDICINE ADULT AND TRANSITIONAL HYDROCEPHALUS PROGRAM



Closing the care gap

More than 1 million people in the U.S. live with hydrocephalus, an abnormal buildup of spinal fluid in the brain. They range from infants, to young and middle-aged adults, to elderly adults well into their 90s. The only effective treatment for hydrocephalus is surgery – implantation of a shunt for most patients, and endoscopic third ventriculostomy (ETV) for those with obstructive hydrocephalus.

People born with the disorder need lifelong, specialized care. But as children grow older and leave their pediatricians, their medical needs often go unmet, especially if they have complex health care needs requiring multiple specialists.

Adults of any age with acquired hydrocephalus (meaning secondary to a previous brain injury or disorder) and older adults with idiopathic normal pressure hydrocephalus (iNPH) need expertise in diagnosis, determination of the need for surgical treatment, and longitudinal care.

Continuing care for these patients is desperately needed, but adult hydrocephalus specialists are few and far between. The UW Medicine Adult and Transitional Hydrocephalus Program aims to close this care gap. We're creating a new, seamless model of care to help patients be healthy and independent throughout their adult lives. Our specialists, who are familiar with the health care needs for adults with hydrocephalus at every age and every stage of life, will be able to access all of the resources and specialists of UW Medicine to achieve the best health care and quality of life possible for our patients.

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The different types of hydrocephalus are:

- Idiopathic normal pressure hydrocephalus (iNPH), typically seen in older adults
- Congenital hydrocephalus, which appears at birth
- Acquired hydrocephalus, which can appear at any age

Improving transitional care

Health care transition for young adults, who are switching from pediatric to adult specialists, centers on three types of young-adult patients:

- Those with few or no symptoms. Regular health visits will focus on detecting the subtle symptoms of worsening hydrocephalus.
- Those with mild cognitive or motor impairments. We'll monitor these patients with family and caregivers to determine if they can live independently.
- Those with significant cognitive or motor impairments. These patients, dependent on family and caregivers, will need regular visits to monitor their condition and prevent complications.



Our services

Our multidisciplinary team of neurologists, neurosurgeons and therapists evaluates and treats all forms of adult hydrocephalus. The best treatment starts with the right diagnosis of these complex conditions, which are often misdiagnosed. We have years of experience assessing patients through brain imaging, gait analysis, spinal fluid pressure monitoring, and spinal fluid drainage.

Treating hydrocephalus typically involves one of two surgeries: inserting a shunt to drain excess fluid, or an endoscopic procedure to restore normal spinal fluid circulation.

Treatment doesn't end after surgery. We continue to provide specialized, lifelong care for all adults, and our close partnership with Seattle Children's Hospital ensures a seamless transition for children with hydrocephalus as they become young adults.

APPOINTMENTS Call the UW Medicine Contact Center to request an appointment at 206.520.5000.

HOURS By appointment only, Monday-Friday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.