

Looking after a loved one with a cranial drain

External ventricular drain



Your loved one has had an external ventricular drain (EVD) installed. This fact sheet explains what you can do to help your loved one, both in hospital and at home.

Why was the drain installed?

The drain helps reduce the pressure in your loved one's skull. Cerebrospinal fluid is intended to protect the brain, but too much cerebrospinal fluid in the skull creates pressure. See the fact sheet [Reducing pressure in the skull with a drain](#).

What happens once the drain is in place?

To maintain the correct pressure in the skull, the drain will be inserted at the height decided by the doctor. This is usually at the ear level. The headboard of the bed will also be raised (to about 30 degrees).

The cerebrospinal fluid flows through a tube to a graduated cylinder and collecting bag. It is measured and reviewed regularly by the care team.

A nurse will monitor your loved one's condition frequently (temperature, blood pressure, breathing, pulse, pain, etc.). The care team will also check to see whether your loved one wakes up easily, even at night. Your loved one will receive at least one solution in a vein until they can drink and eat on their own.



After the drain is inserted, your loved one may have pain where the drain enters the skull. The nurse will give them medication to relieve the pain.



If your loved one needs to change position, call the nurse. The drain needs to be at the proper level after changing position.

What can I do to help my loved one at the hospital?

If you can be involved, that will be much appreciated. You will be informed of any changes in your loved one's condition. You will be encouraged to participate in decisions that affect your loved one.

- > If your loved one is in pain, tell the nurse.
- > You can also help your loved one to have less pain by:
 - encouraging them to take deep breaths
 - having them listen to soothing music
 - asking them what would be helpful to them
 - asking the health care team what you can do

Care is organized and noise is reduced as much as possible to provide an environment that makes recovery easier.

When will the drain be removed?

The drain stays in place for a variable length of time. It depends on the reason why it was inserted and your loved one's health condition. It is left in place for 10 to 14 days.

Sometimes the drain may need to be replaced or some other type of drain may be required. The care team will discuss this with you if necessary.

What should I watch for when my loved one comes home?

Your loved one will only return home after the drain has been removed. Contact their doctor right away if any of the following symptoms appear:

- swelling or redness of the skin in the area where the drain was inserted
- fever: 38.5°C (101°F) and over



- stiffness of the neck
- fluid leaking from the wound
- loss of appetite
- a general feeling of discomfort
- headaches
- stomach aches

If you are unable to contact a member of your loved one's care team, here are other options you can try:

- > Call Info-Santé at **8-1-1**
- > Go to a walk-in clinic or a CLSC
- > Go to the Emergency Room

When will the sutures or staples be removed?

The staples will be removed 7 to 10 days after the drain is inserted, when the wound is well healed. The stitches used to close the drain hole will be removed 7 to 10 days after the drain is removed. The doctor or nurse will tell you when and where this will be done.

If "dissolving" type stitches were used, they will disappear on their own. The family doctor or CLSC nurse will examine the scar to make sure everything is going well.



What is the follow-up after coming home?

The doctor will see your loved one for a follow-up visit at the clinic about 8 weeks after discharge from the hospital. You may be told the date, time, and place of the appointment before you leave the care unit.

Date :

Time :

Place :

Who should I contact for help or to ask questions?

While your loved one is in the hospital:

The surgeon, nurse, or care team are the people who can best answer your questions.

When you are at home:

Contact the doctor or follow-up nurse.

Tel. :



USEFUL RESOURCES

Other health sheets published by the CHUM are available. Ask for those that might fit your situation.



You can also find them on our web site chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante



NOTEPAD



Questions



Resource people and contacts

The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal chumontreal.qc.ca

