

Intraventricular Hemorrhage (IVH)

What is an intraventricular hemorrhage?

An intraventricular hemorrhage or IVH is bleeding from fragile blood vessels within the ventricles of the brain. Ventricles are spaces within the brain that are normally filled with clear fluid called cerebral spinal fluid.

It is very common for premature babies to have IVH to some degree. Premature babies are more likely to have IVH because the blood vessels in their brains are very fragile and sensitive to changes in blood flow. Changes in blood flow may cause the blood vessels to rupture and bleed. This bleeding usually occurs near the centre of the brain, within the first 3 days of life.

How does IVH affect a baby?

The effect of IVH depends on:

- the amount of bleeding
- where the bleeding has happened
- how far the bleeding spreads throughout the brain

A small IVH may stay contained to a certain area. The blood can be absorbed back into the bloodstream and there may be few or no long term effects.

A larger IVH can spread over a greater area and irritate the brain tissue or put a great deal of pressure on the brain.

How can you tell if my baby has had an IVH?

IVH is usually found by an ultrasound test in the first few days of life.

This test does not hurt your baby. It is just like an ultrasound you may have had during pregnancy. The ultrasound test sends sound waves through the soft spot on your baby's head. As the sound waves travel through the brain tissue, the ultrasound machine reads them and makes a picture of the brain. Any bleeding will show up on this picture.

What happens if my baby has an IVH?

If your baby has an IVH, the doctors and nurses will talk with you about:

- the results of the ultrasound
- how your baby may be affected
- the care your baby needs

You may not notice any change in you baby's behaviour. However, your baby may need a ventilator to help with breathing. Your baby may have more ultrasound tests to check the bleeding.

When you leave the hospital, your baby's health and behaviour will continue to be checked at follow-up appointments.

You may go to the Growth and Development Clinic at the McMaster Children's Hospital.

**If you have any questions about IVH or your baby,
please talk with your baby's nurse or doctor.**