

Intracranial Hypertension

Intracranial hypertension, also called pseudotumor cerebri (su-do-toomer ser-a-bri), is a build up of pressure in the brain. This can cause headaches and vision problems. It is a disease that is often found in women ages 20 to 50. The pressure is caused by the build up of cerebral spinal fluid (CSF) around the brain and eye nerves. The cause of the disease is not known.

Signs

Vision changes and headaches are the most common signs reported. The vision changes are the most serious. If ignored, it can lead to blindness. Patients may have some or all of these signs:

- Vision changes
 - ▶ Blurred vision
 - ▶ Double vision
 - ▶ Vision loss that comes and goes
 - ▶ Eye pain
 - ▶ Problems with depth perception
- Headaches
- Nausea and vomiting
- Hearing swishing noises
- Ringing in the ears

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Learn more about your health care.

Diagnosis

See your doctor as soon as you have any signs. The doctor will check you to find the cause of the signs. Neurological and vision exams may be done as well as tests such as a spinal tap, a head CT scan or brain MRI.

Treatment

Ongoing care is needed to manage the disease. Your doctor will work to reduce the pressure, especially the vision changes. Treatment includes both medicines and surgery. Often multiple treatments are needed.

Medical treatment may include:

- **Spinal tap**, also called a **lumbar puncture or LP**, to remove the CSF and reduce pressure on the brain and eye nerves. The LP may reduce pressure for hours or days. It may be repeated.
 - ▶ After the spinal tap, you may have a spinal headache from low pressure for several days until the fluid pressure builds back up.
 - ▶ Lay flat and drink lots of fluids. Drinks with caffeine may help.
- **Medicines** to reduce the CSF pressure or manage the signs.
 - ▶ Medicines to reduce pressure may include Diamox, lasix, neptazine or steroids. Some of these medicines can cause tingling in the fingers and toes.
 - ▶ Medicines to help the headaches and nausea and vomiting can also be given.
- **Weight loss**
 - ▶ Losing weight may help.

Surgical treatment

Surgery may be needed for those who do not respond to the medical treatments. Surgery may include procedures to reduce the pressure on the

eye nerves or brain. A shunt or drain tube can be used to redirect the CSF out of the brain.

Call your doctor if your headaches or vision problems get worse. This may be a sign your treatment is not working.

Resources

Contact these groups for more information about the disease.

- **National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke**
Phone: 1-800-352-9424
Web site:
www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/pseudotumorcerebri/pseudotumorcerebri.htm
- **Pseudotumor Cerebri Support Network**
Email: ptcduncan@juno.com
Web site: www.pseudotumorcerebri.com
- **Intracranial Hypertension Research Foundation**
Phone: 360-693-4473
Fax: 360-694-7062
Email: contact@ihrfoundation.org
Website: www.IHRFoundation.org
- **National Organization for Rare Disorders (NORD)**
Phone: 203-744-0100
Voice Mail: 1-800-999-NORD (6673)
Fax: 203-798-2291
Email: orphan@rarediseases.org
Web site: www.rarediseases.org
- **Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.**