Intraventricular Hemorrhage (IVH)

Intraventricular hemorrhage or IVH is a condition where blood vessels in the baby’s brain bleed into the fluid filled spaces of the brain. This condition is most often seen in premature babies, because blood vessels before 35 weeks are very fragile. Bleeding can occur without injury and may be due to the delicate structures that are not yet mature in the baby.

About IVH

IVH describes where the bleeding happens in the brain. The term “intraventricular” means inside the ventricles. Ventricles are the fluid filled spaces in the brain that hold Cerebral Spinal Fluid or CSF. CSF is the liquid that protects and gives nutrients to the brain and spine.

IVH may not be present at birth, but may occur within the first three days after birth. Bleeding into the ventricles can put pressure on nerves in the brain. The more bleeding that occurs, the greater the risk for injury.
Signs of IVH

While some babies do not show signs of IVH, others may show:

- Apnea or periods when baby stops breathing
- Weakness or lack of muscle tone
- Constant sleeping or hard to wake up
- Swelling at the soft spots on the baby’s head (fontanelles)
- Skin colors changes, baby may appear bluish
- Seizures

Testing and Treatment

If your baby's doctor thinks there may be IVH, ultrasound testing may be done to allow the doctor to see the amount of bleeding present. There is no treatment for IVH unless the baby has another problem that may cause more risk of bleeding.

In some cases where the bleeding leads to enlarged ventricles, a shunt or hollow tube may be placed under the skin. The tube allows blood and CSF to drain from the ventricles into the abdomen.

Babies with IVH need careful monitoring while in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and after discharge. Talk with your doctor or nurse about your baby’s plan for care.

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.