



## What is an intrathecal pump?

An intrathecal pump is a small machine used to give medicine to your child. Intrathecal means it is given right into the spinal fluid. This fluid surrounds the spinal cord.

The pump holds the medicine and a small plastic tube. The tube goes right into your child's back and into the spinal fluid. The pump gives the medicine to the spinal fluid. The pump:

- Is about the size of a large donut.
- Gives your child medicine in very small doses throughout the day and night.
- Gives your child the right dose based on their needs.
- Uses batteries that most often last for 5 to 8 years.
- Has alarms that go off when there is a problem with the pump and when the medicine is running low.



**Intrathecal pump  
by Medtronic**

## How is it placed?

The doctor will give your child a test dose of medicine. Their doctor may schedule them for a pump if the test dose worked.

- Your child is put to sleep with medicine during the surgery.
- The pump is placed under the skin and held in place with staples or stitches.
- The doctor sets the pump to give your child their right dose of medicine.

Talk with your child's doctor or nurse about:

- How to get your child ready for the surgery.
- When your child needs to stop eating and drinking before the surgery.
- What time to get to the hospital for the surgery.

## How do I take care of my child after surgery?

Your child's doctor will give you some guidelines to care for your child. These include:

- Your child should lie as flat as possible for 7 to 10 days. This helps to lessen nausea, vomiting (throwing up) and headaches. They should:
  - Lay on their right or left side – not on their stomach or back.
  - Change their position often. This helps stop skin problems and sores.
- You should not put too much pressure on the pump:
  - Do not let your child put their arms around your neck when you pick up them up or move them.
  - Do not raise your child's arms above their head. Button-up shirts are best.
  - Roll your baby from side to side to change diapers. Do not lift their legs.

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**

# Intrathecal pump, continued

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- Talk with the physical therapist (PT), case manager or orthotist before your child goes home if they use a wheelchair. They may need changes to their chair.

You should protect the area where the pump was put under the skin. It will take some time for the pump to be held in place. Your child may have to **stop** these things for 4 to 6 weeks if the doctor tells you to:

- Moving that can loosen the pump, like:
  - Bending or twisting at the waist
  - Reaching their arms above their head
  - Bending forward or backward
- Sleeping on their stomach or where the pump was put under the skin.

The medicine tube can become loose if your child moves around too much right after surgery. Your child may not get the right amount of medicine if this happens. This could make your child sick. Your child needs to see a doctor right away if the tube becomes loose.

## How do I care for my child's incision?

- The skin and staples, or stitches, around where the pump is put under the skin is called the incision. Keep this area clean and dry. Check it every day for signs of infection, such as:
  - Redness
  - Swelling
  - Drainage or pus
  - Bad smell
- Take your child's temperature when they wake up and before they go to bed. Fever is a sign of infection.
  - If their temperature is over 101°F, give them acetaminophen (Tylenol or less costly store brand). Call your child's doctor **right away** if their temperature does not come down to normal in 1 hour.
  - Do not give acetaminophen to babies younger than 3 months unless a doctor tells you to.
  - Do not give your child acetaminophen more than 5 doses in 24 hours.
- Do not let the pump go under water for 4 weeks after surgery. Your child should not take a tub bath or swim.
  - Give your child a sponge bath, or
  - Cover the incision with gauze and plastic wrap in the shower.
- Do not let anything rub against or lay on the incision, like:
  - Diapers
  - Belts
  - Clothing
  - Seatbelts
  - Car seat harnesses
  - Restraints

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## What follow-up care does my child need?

- Take your child to all follow-up visits.
- Give the staff your Emergency Card and Implanted Device Card **right away** if you take your child to the emergency department (ED).
- Always tell anyone caring for your child that they have a pump.

**This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.**

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