

*Better
Together*

Patient information

Idiopathic Intracranial Hypertension

Emergency Care

Acute Medical Assessment Unit

Idiopathic intracranial hypertension (IIH) is a condition where there is raised pressure around the brain without an identifiable secondary cause such as, for example, a tumour. Although we do not know what causes IIH, those most at risk of developing it are women of childbearing age who are also overweight or have gained weight quickly.

The most common symptom is headache, but you may also notice disturbances in your vision, or your doctor/optician may notice swelling at the back of your eyes.

If you notice disturbances in your vision, you should seek urgent family doctor (GP) or local hospital advice.

IIH is diagnosed by performing a lumbar puncture in hospital. This involves placing a small needle into your lower back and measuring the pressure at which your spinal fluid flows.

If this pressure is raised, a diagnosis of IIH is made after secondary causes of raised pressure have been excluded. You are therefore likely to have other investigations performed during your stay, such as a brain scan.

The most effective treatment of IIH is weight loss. You should aim to lose 10 to 15% of your body weight over six months, and we advise you to ask your GP to get you into a community weight management program.

Your doctor may start you on a tablet called acetazolamide to help treat IIH but it is unlikely to help in the absence of weight loss.

You should not use painkillers more than twice a week as these can actually worsen your headache, as can codeine and other opiates, which should therefore be avoided.

If you do need to use painkillers, aim to use only paracetamol, ibuprofen or naproxen, and not more than two to three times a week.

After you are discharged from hospital you should expect an appointment either at The Royal Liverpool Hospital or The Walton Centre within two to four weeks. If you do not hear about your appointment within this time please contact The Walton Centre appointment Office (number shown below).

Further information

Walton Centre Appointments

Tel: 0151 529 4774

Text phone number: 18001 0151 529 4774

Further Reading can be found at - www.iih.org.uk

Authors: Emergency Care

Review date: March 2019

All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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