



Information for You from Your Health Care Team

Vasospasm

You may hear a lot of words used when we talk about treating your family member and we know these words can sound frightening. One of the words you may hear often is cerebral vasospasm. This handout explains vasospasm and some of the other words you may hear when we talk about vasospasm. A brain bleed (subarachnoid hemorrhage) in a loved one is very frightening.

What is vasospasm?

Cerebral vasospasm is the narrowing of arteries in the brain. The narrowing (constriction) of the arteries can decrease the amount of blood flowing in the brain. Not all people with a brain bleed will have vasospasm.

Why does it happen?

Vasospasm may occur after a brain bleed. The side effect of the bleed is that the blood breaks down and surrounds the artery. This breakdown may cause constriction of the arteries.

When does vasospasm occur?

A vasospasm usually starts 3 to 10 days after the bleed. It can last anywhere from a few days up to 3 weeks.

What will I see?

Often, the first sign people experience is confusion. They may not remember where they are or the date. They may be harder to wake up, have slurred speech, or be weaker on one side of their body. The health care team does frequent exams to look for any of these changes.

Can anything be done to prevent vasospasm?

We will give medicines to try and prevent vasospasm. Listed below are some of the medicines we use.

- **Dexamethasone (dex-a-METH-a-son)** Brand Name: (Decadron®):
A steroid that helps to decrease swelling of the arteries.
- **Nimodipine (nye-MOE-di-peen)**: Helps keep the artery relaxed and open.

You will also hear us talk about “triple H” therapy. We will give a lot of intravenous (IV) fluids. IV medicine may also be used to make the blood pressure higher. It is believed that this helps keep the arteries open and brings blood to all parts of the brain.

Here are some other words you may hear:

Swan-Ganz: A Swan-Ganz catheter is a large IV that is placed inside the heart. We will give IV fluids through this. We also measure heart pressures. We use these pressures to tell if the patient has enough fluid for triple H therapy. We can also tell if the heart is handling the extra fluid. You may also hear us call a Swan-Ganz a “Swan”.

Angiogram: Some patients will require a cerebral angiogram. This is a x-ray of the brain in which a dye is injected. This allows us to look at a picture of the brain’s arteries. The angiogram allows us to see if any arteries are in vasospasm. You may also hear us call an angiogram as an “angio”.

Papavarine or Verapamil: These medicines may be is given during the angiogram. The drug is put directly into the artery that is in spasm from the groin. It relaxes the artery walls and opens up the artery, temporarily.

We hope this has helped you understand some of the medical terms you may hear. Please ask the doctors and nurses any questions you may have.

Speak Up if You Have Any Questions or Concerns

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