Intrathecal Baclofen Pump: Possible Complications

For certain patients with spasticity, an intrathecal baclofen (ITB) pump offers many benefits. The medicine delivered by the pump helps lessen the amount of spasticity in your muscles, making it easier for you to function and for someone to help care for you. However, any time a patient has surgery or starts using a new medicine, there are some risks. The more you are aware of these risks, the sooner problems can be identified and treated.

When to Call Gillette

If you notice any symptoms included in the lists below, call Telehealth Nursing at 651-229-3890.

Infection

If infection occurs, it will likely develop during the first two months after your pump has been implanted. Watch for:

- Elevated temperature
- Reddened incision area (at pump site or on the back)
- Swelling at pump site or back incision
- Warmth at pump site or back incision
- Firmness at pump site or back incision
- Drainage from any incision
- Headache
- Stiff neck
- Sensitivity to light

Withdrawal

These symptoms might occur if the amount of medicine you are receiving through the pump is decreased too rapidly:

- Itching, tingling or other unusual sensations
- Headache
- Suddenly increased muscle tone, often accompanied by spasms
- Seizures
- Irritability
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that aren't really there)
• Temperature increase

Central Spinal Fluid (CFS) Leak

CFS fluid is the fluid that surrounds the brain and spinal cord. If this fluid is leaking through the covering of your spinal cord, you might notice the following symptoms:

• A headache that is present when you are upright, but that improves or goes away when you lie flat in bed
• Nausea or vomiting

Side Effects

This is related to the baclofen medicine itself. Symptoms include:

• Change in your bowel or bladder function
• A decrease in head or trunk control

Overdose

It is extremely rare to overdose (get too much baclofen) when you have an ITB pump. Symptoms of overdose include:

• Ascending hypotonia (increasingly lower muscle tone)
• Drowsiness
• Lightheadedness
• Tiredness
• Respiratory depression (breathing that is slow and shallow)
• Seizures
• Loss of consciousness

Make An Appointment 651-290-8707