

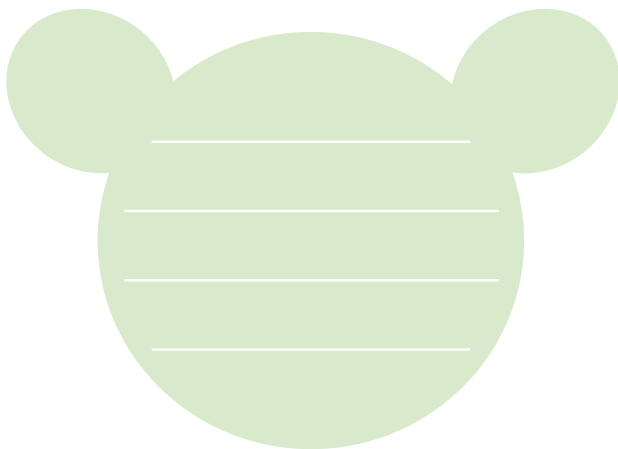
Benny gets better



"A diagnosis of hydrocephalus can be worrying for both children and their parents. I hope that those children lucky enough to meet Benny the Bear in hospital will read this book and discover that hydrocephalus needn't be scary."

Mr Conor Mallucci,  
Consultant Paediatric Neurosurgeon,  
Alderhey Children's Hospital, Liverpool.

with love from  
Benny Bear to:



Written by Rosemary Batchelor and Val Meyer-Hall from  
The Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus.(ASBAH)  
Illustrated by Charlotte Meyer whose sister has hydrocephalus.





T

his is Benny the Bear.

He is a very special bear.

Benny is a bear with a shunt.

Benny needs the shunt to help him  
to stay well because when he was  
a little bear, Benny was poorly.



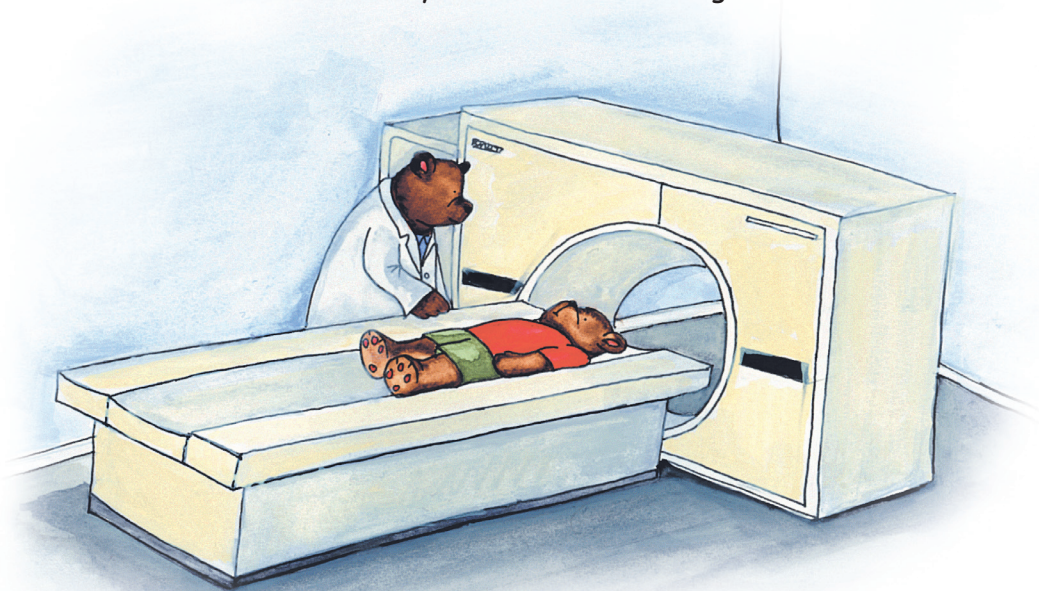


**H**e had bad headaches and he kept being sick. Benny didn't want to run or jump or play football. He didn't even want to tease his sister, Sally or watch TV. He just wanted to lie down or go to sleep. Sometimes he felt dizzy and fell over. Sometimes he just cried and cried because he felt so ill.



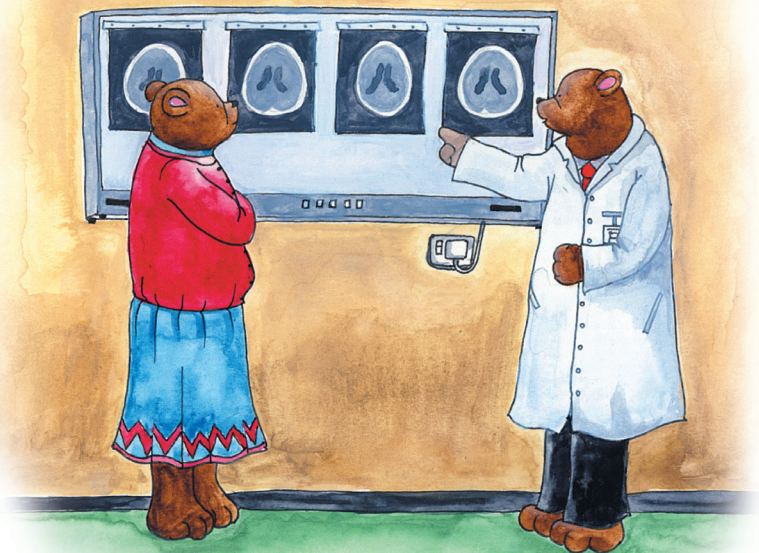
**B**enny's mummy was very worried and took him to see a doctor.  
"What a poorly little bear" said the doctor and sent him to see a really clever doctor called a neurosurgeon in the big hospital in town.

A t the hospital, Benny went for a special photograph called a scan to find out why his head was hurting.



Benny had to lie very still during the scan so that the doctors could get clear pictures of inside his head.





The scan showed that Benny had too much fluid inside his brain and it was not draining away as it should.

The neurosurgeon explained that this meant that Benny has hydrocephalus. To make Benny feel better, he would need an operation to put a shunt into his head to help drain the fluid away.



In the morning of Benny's operation, Benny wasn't allowed to have his breakfast or anything to drink.

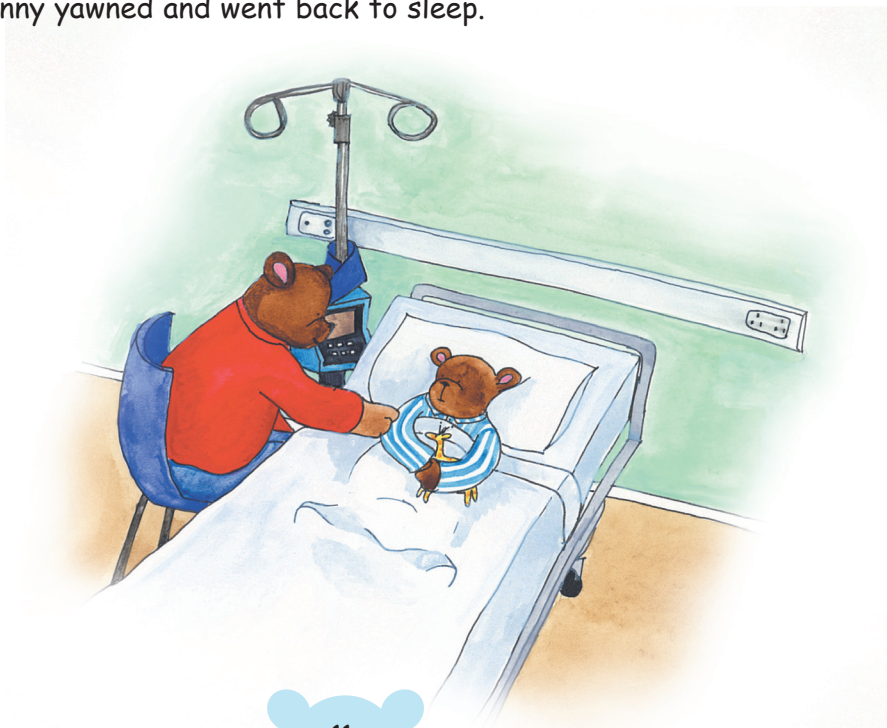
Mummy helped Benny to put on a funny shirt called a theatre gown and then he had some medicine to make him feel sleepy.



A nice porter wheeled Benny in his hospital bed along the corridors to the operating theatre and Mummy stayed with him until he was asleep.

W

hen Benny woke up he felt a bit sore on his tummy and on one side of his head. Mummy was sitting by his bed and she explained that the doctors had put his shunt in his head and a long tube under his skin which drained into his tummy. Benny yawned and went back to sleep.







The next time Benny woke up he felt much better and soon the soreness was gone. After a few days, Mummy took Benny back home. He was so happy to see Daddy and Sally and tell them about his time in hospital.



Benny is back at school now.  
He has a shunt alert card  
to keep in his pocket.  
This explains that he is  
a very special bear who  
has a shunt to keep him well.



Look at Benny!  
He can run around, he can jump and  
play football and he loves to ride  
his bike. Sometimes he will even tease  
Sally or chase the cat.



# some words that you may not know

## Hydrocephalus

This is when the brain produces too much fluid or the fluid does not drain properly.

## Neurosurgeon

A doctor who works in a hospital and who specialises in problems that happen to peoples' brains.

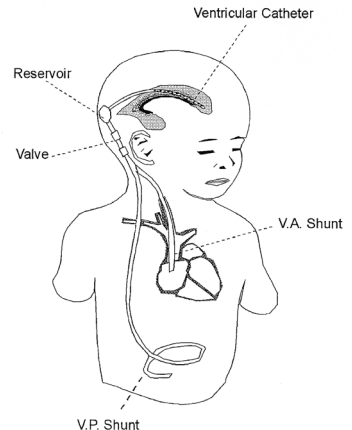
## Scan

A picture of the inside of the head which helps doctors to understand how to help their patient.

## Shunt

A tube that takes away any extra fluid from the head and drains it into the tummy (or sometimes another part of the body) where it is absorbed naturally.

Diagram by Pete Noons



## Shunt Alert Card

Ask a grown up to get you one from ASBAH. You should carry your card with you in your pocket or bag every time you go out.

If you lose it (or put it in the washing machine!), we will send another one.

ASBAH phone number is 01733 555988

Email us on [postmaster@asbah.org](mailto:postmaster@asbah.org)

Write to ASBAH House

42 Park Road

Peterborough

PE1 2UQ

**Personal details**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

I am away from home. It is important that my condition is treated at a specialist neurological centre **within four hours** of acute symptoms developing.  
I am currently taking the following medication \_\_\_\_\_  
Known allergies \_\_\_\_\_

ASBAH is a registered charity which is wholly dependent upon voluntary donations. ASBAH receives no Government funding.  
For more information about hydrocephalus, visit [www.asbah.org](http://www.asbah.org)

**ASBAH**  
42 Park Road  
Peterborough, PE1 2UQ  
Tel: 01733 555988  
Fax: 01733 555985  
[www.asbah.org](http://www.asbah.org)  
ASBAH is a registered charity number 1401208

**TO BE USED IN AN EMERGENCY**  
I have Hydrocephalus which is controlled by a VP / VA - shunt (delete which does not apply)

**Medical details**

If I have any of the following symptoms, callist or GP:  
Headache  
Nausea  
Vomiting  
Blurred vision  
Double vision  
Balance problems  
Changes in behaviour or personality  
Changes in memory  
Changes in speech  
Changes in hearing  
Changes in vision  
Changes in taste  
Changes in smell  
Changes in touch  
Changes in pain  
Changes in temperature  
Changes in sweating  
Changes in heart rate  
Changes in blood pressure  
Changes in breathing  
Changes in swallowing  
Changes in urination  
Changes in defecation  
Changes in menstruation  
Changes in fertility  
Changes in pregnancy  
Changes in childbirth  
Changes in breastfeeding  
Changes in weaning  
Changes in walking  
Changes in running  
Changes in jumping  
Changes in climbing  
Changes in playing  
Changes in learning  
Changes in thinking  
Changes in feeling  
Changes in acting  
Changes in reacting  
Changes in responding  
Changes in interacting  
Changes in communicating  
Changes in relating  
Changes in connecting  
Changes in bonding  
Changes in attaching  
Changes in identifying  
Changes in distinguishing  
Changes in understanding  
Changes in knowing  
Changes in believing  
Changes in trusting  
Changes in loving  
Changes in caring  
Changes in sharing  
Changes in giving  
Changes in taking  
Changes in making  
Changes in doing  
Changes in having  
Changes in being  
Changes in becoming  
Changes in growing  
Changes in developing  
Changes in maturing  
Changes in ageing  
Changes in dying

**Symptoms of Hydrocephalus**

Whenever there is a possibility that my Hydrocephalus is causing problems, it is imperative to seek the correct help immediately.

**Possible signs of acute shunt blockage or infection may include:**  
Vomiting, headache, dizziness, photophobia (sensitivity to light) and other visual disturbances, drowsiness and fits.

**Possible signs of chronic shunt blockage may include:**  
Headache, vision-perceptual distortions, changes in behaviour, changes in performance, being 'out of sync' from the care's point of view.

**Additional details**

Name of next of kin \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship to card bearer \_\_\_\_\_  
If available, please supply the following facts about your shunt:  
What model (manufacturer) is it \_\_\_\_\_  
Serial number \_\_\_\_\_  
When was a pit in place? \_\_\_\_\_  
Who performed the operation? \_\_\_\_\_



This is a story about a special bear with a shunt  
but lots of girls and boys have shunts too.  
Perhaps you are one of them.



**ASBAH**

Association for Spina Bifida  
and Hydrocephalus

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**Codman**

*a Johnson & Johnson company*

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