External Ventricular Drain (Ventriculostomy) and Intracranial Pressure (ICP) Monitoring

What is it?
An External Ventricular Drain (EVD) is a special device that is placed into a space inside the brain (called a ventricle). This is done by a neurosurgeon. It can be done at the bedside in your hospital room or during surgery.

Why might you need an EVD?
The ventricles in the brain hold cerebrospinal fluid (CSF). This fluid protects and feeds the brain and spinal cord. When the pressure inside your head is too high, your brain does not get the blood and nutrients it needs. This means it cannot work well. Draining CSF is a way to keep pressure down.

An EVD can:
• Keep track of pressure inside your head, called intracranial pressure (ICP). Normal pressure is about 15 mm Hg.
• Drain CSF if needed to relieve the pressure and help the brain function better.

Sometimes, your doctor just wants to watch and keep track of intracranial pressure. For this, he or she may just insert a monitor. It is placed just like an EVD, but it cannot drain fluid.

What do nurses do with an EVD?
Your nurses keep track of your ICP and drainage every hour. The EVD will be draining fluid most of the time. The drain is carefully hung next to the bed based on where you are lying in the bed. It is very important that you or your visitors do not move the head of your bed or the height of your bed. Your nurse may lock your bed so you don’t forget.

Important points:
• Never move the head of your bed or the height of your bed.
• Never sit up or get out of bed by yourself. Please call your nurse if you need help.
• It is very important to be in a calm, quiet environment. Your nurse will help with this and may ask your guests to limit visits, if needed.
• To prevent infection or pulling out the drain, do not touch your head.
• Your doctor will order dressing changes and special lab tests. Visitors will be asked to step out of the room for a short time because your nurse will need a sterile area.
• Please ask your nurse when you or your guests have any questions.