Ommaya Reservoir

What is an Ommaya reservoir?

An Ommaya reservoir is a small plastic dome-like device with a small tube. The reservoir is placed under the skin in the scalp. The small tube is inserted into a space in the brain called a ventricle. The ventricle contains cerebrospinal fluid (CSF). CSF serves as a cushion to the brain and spinal cord.

What is the purpose of an Ommaya reservoir?

Most often, the reservoir is used in cancer treatment. It allows medicine to be injected directly into the CSF of the brain and spinal cord. The reservoir also is used to:

- Take a CSF sample to look for abnormal cells.
- Measure the pressure in the brain.

What can I expect when the Ommaya reservoir is placed?

Before surgery, the hair where the reservoir will be placed will be shaved. After an incision is made in the scalp, a small opening in the skull is made. The reservoir is then placed between the scalp and the skull as the tube is threaded into the ventricle. The incision is closed with stitches.
After this surgery, most patients only have minor pain. Talk with your doctor or nurse about what pain medicine you can take.

Until the stitches are taken out and the incision is healed:

- Keep your scalp incision dry.
- Do not wash your scalp or hair.

The stitches are taken out 7 to 14 days after surgery.

Avoid any injury to the area.

**What steps are used to access the Ommaya reservoir?**

First your doctor or nurse will feel the reservoir and push down on it 3 to 5 times. This is done to fill the reservoir with CSF. The area will be cleaned and a small needle will be inserted into the reservoir.

If needed, a small amount of fluid will be taken out with a syringe and sent to the lab for testing. Medication will then be injected into the reservoir slowly over 5 to 10 minutes.

After the needle is removed, the area may be covered with a small Band-Aid®.

Again, your doctor or nurse will push down on the reservoir 3 to 5 times to let the medicine go into the CSF of the brain and spinal cord. During this time you may have some minor pain.

The entire process takes 10 to 15 minutes.

**What do you do after the reservoir is accessed?**

Your doctor or nurse may ask you to lie flat for up to 30 minutes after the reservoir is accessed.

You may then sit, stand and do all normal activities, including washing your hair.

**When should you call your doctor or nurse?**

If you have any of the following, please contact your doctor or nurse:

- Soreness, redness or drainage from the site.
- Fever 100.5° F or higher.
- A stiff neck.
- A headache with or without vomiting.
- Blurred vision.