Craniosynostosis

Craniosynostosis is a *congenital* (present since birth) anomaly characterized by *premature* (early) closure of one or more cranial sutures (the fibrous joints between the bones of the skull). The disorder results in an abnormality of the shape of the skull. The condition may be familial; a result of a chromosomal or genetic abnormality; or it may occur spontaneously, with no other affected relatives. Some cases are associated with disorders such as microcephaly (abnormally small head) and hydrocephalus (excessive accumulation of cerebrospinal fluid in the brain). The first sign is an abnormal head shape. Other *symptoms* (problems), which include increased intracranial pressure, developmental delay, and mental retardation, may be caused by constriction of the growing brain. Seizures and blindness may also occur.

TREATMENT

Treatment for craniosynostosis generally consists of surgery (usually performed early in life) to relieve increased intracranial pressure, assure capacity of the skull to accommodate brain growth, and improve the appearance of the head.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

Prognosis (likely outcome) for craniosynostosis varies depending on whether single or multiple sutures are involved and the presence of associated abnormalities. Prognosis is better for those with single suture involvement and no associated abnormalities.

RESEARCH BEING DONE

The NINDS conducts and supports a wide range of studies that explore the complex mechanisms of early neurological development. The knowledge gained from these fundamental studies provides the foundation for understanding how this process can go awry and, thus, offers hope for new means to treat and prevent congenital anomalies, including craniosynostosis.

Research is continually being done to learn more about this problem.

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