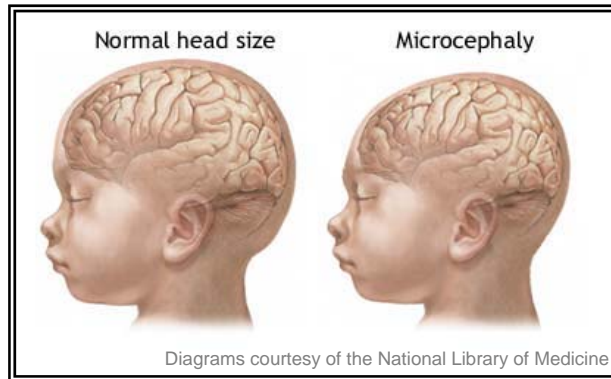


Microcephaly

What is microcephaly?

Microcephaly is a condition in which the **size of the head is smaller than normal** because the brain has not developed properly or has stopped growing. It can be present at birth or may develop in the first few years of life.



Most babies with microcephaly will continue to have a head that is smaller than normal as they get older. Some children with microcephaly will have normal intelligence and a head size that gradually gets bigger as they get older. However, some children with microcephaly may have other birth defects, such as **short stature** (height), **facial abnormalities**, **brain abnormalities**, **seizures**, or **problems with walking or balance**. In addition, some babies with microcephaly may have **mental retardation** or **developmental delay** (failure to meet developmental milestones on time).

What causes microcephaly?

Microcephaly is most often caused by **genetic conditions** (such as chromosome abnormalities or metabolic conditions) that interfere with the growth of the brain during the early months of fetal development. Babies may also have microcephaly if the mother used **alcohol or drugs during pregnancy**, or if the mother was infected with certain **viruses** (such as cytomegalovirus (CMV) or varicella / chicken pox), exposed to certain toxic chemicals, or if she had **untreated phenylketonuria** (also called PKU).

How is microcephaly treated?

Currently, no treatment is available for microcephaly that will result in a normal head size or shape for children with microcephaly. Most treatment options help decrease the impact of any associated birth defects or developmental delays that may be present.

For more information

Mayo Clinic - <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/microcephaly/AN00236>

MedlinePlus Medical Encyclopedia - <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/imagepages/17256.htm>

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke -

<http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/microcephaly/microcephaly.htm>

Source: National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke