

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Frequently Asked Questions About Ommaya Reservoirs and Ommaya Taps for Pediatric Patients

This information answers some commonly asked questions about Ommaya reservoirs and Ommaya taps. In this resource, the words “you” and “your” refer to you or your child.

## Ommaya Reservoirs

What is an Ommaya reservoir?

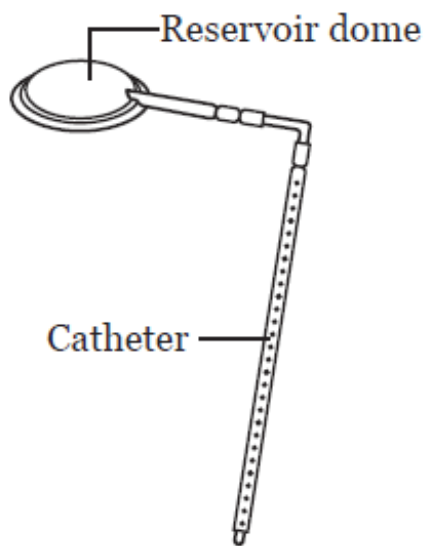


Figure 1. Ommaya reservoir

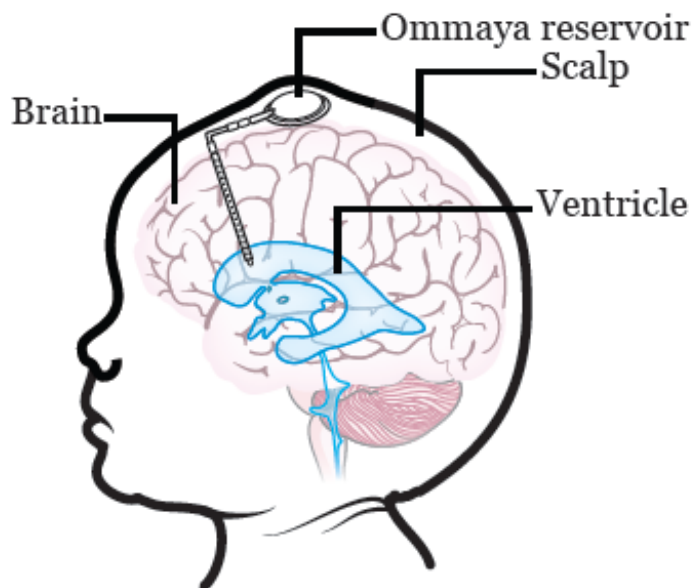


Figure 2. Placement of the Ommaya reservoir

An Ommaya reservoir is a quarter-sized, soft, plastic, dome-shaped device that is placed under the scalp. It's connected to a catheter (thin, flexible tube) that's placed in one of the ventricles in your brain (see Figures 1 and 2). Your ventricles are hollow spaces that make cerebrospinal fluid (CSF), which surrounds your brain and spinal cord.

### **Why do I need an Ommaya reservoir?**

An Ommaya reservoir will help your healthcare provider:

- Get samples of your CSF. Your healthcare provider can check your CSF for cancer cells or infections.
- Give you medication, such as chemotherapy, monoclonal antibodies, or antibiotics directly into your CSF.

These procedures are referred to as an “Ommaya reservoir tap.” You may need fewer spinal taps, if you have an Ommaya reservoir.

### **How is an Ommaya reservoir placed?**

Your Ommaya reservoir will be placed during a surgery. Your doctor or nurse will explain the details of your surgery. Your nurse will help you prepare and will give you a resource called *About Your Ommaya Reservoir Placement Surgery for Pediatric Patients* ([www.mskcc.org/pe/ommaya\\_reservoir\\_surgery](http://www.mskcc.org/pe/ommaya_reservoir_surgery)). You can also search for the resource at [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe)

### **Can the Ommaya reservoir be removed?**

The reservoir usually isn't removed unless you have complications with it.

### **Are there restrictions on my activities with an Ommaya reservoir?**

For at least 2 to 6 weeks after your Ommaya reservoir placement surgery, don't participate in any contact sports (such as football, boxing, or wrestling). This gives your incision (surgical cut) time to heal.

Talk with your neurosurgeon about when you can resume gym class and contact sports again. Remember to wear a helmet, if needed. This reduces your risk of getting a head injury.

### **How do I care for my Ommaya reservoir?**

Your Ommaya reservoir doesn't need special care. You can wash your hair as usual.

## **About Ommaya Reservoir Taps**

### **Do I need to do anything to prepare for my Ommaya reservoir tap?**

Tell your healthcare provider if you're allergic to iodine (Betadine®). They will use a different solution.

You don't need to do anything else to prepare for your tap. You can eat your meals and take your medications as usual.

Some people may have another scan or procedure after the tap. If you will be getting anesthesia (medication to make you sleepy), follow the directions that healthcare provider gave you about eating, drinking, and taking medications.

### **What happens during the tap?**

Your healthcare provider will perform your tap in an exam room or at your bedside.

1. Your healthcare provider will gently feel the Ommaya reservoir. They will push down on it several times to pump it. This pulls the CSF into the reservoir.
2. You may be asked to lie on your back. Your healthcare provider will clean your skin with Betadine or a different solution if you're allergic to Betadine.

3. Your healthcare provider will insert a small needle with tubing attached to it into your reservoir (see Figure 3). You might feel slight discomfort from the needlestick. Your healthcare provider will take out a small amount of CSF through a syringe that's attached to the tubing. The CSF may be sent to the lab to check for cancer cells or infection. If you're also getting medication during the tap, some of the CSF may be saved in the syringe to be used as a "flush" (see step 4).
4. If you're getting medication during the tap, your healthcare provider will inject it slowly into your reservoir, after withdrawing the CSF. They will then flush your Ommaya reservoir with the saved CSF to push the medication into your ventricle.
5. Your healthcare provider will remove the needle and apply gentle pressure with gauze for about 1 minute to prevent any CSF from leaking out. The area may then be covered with a bandage (Band-Aid®).

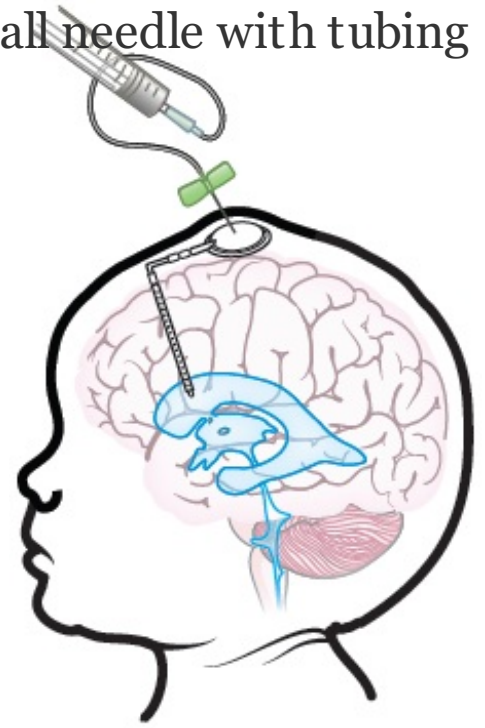


Figure 3. During an Ommaya tap

## **How long does the tap take?**

The tap usually takes about 15 minutes.

## **When can I resume my normal activities?**

You can resume all your normal activities after your tap, including washing your hair. Your Ommaya reservoir won't need any special care.

## **Call Your Healthcare Provider if You Have:**

- A temperature of 100.4° F (38°C) or higher
- Tenderness, redness, or swelling around your reservoir
- Clear, bloody, or pus-like discharge from your reservoir
- Headaches
- Vomiting
- Neck stiffness
- Blurry vision
- Confusion

If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

---

Frequently Asked Questions About Ommaya Reservoirs and Ommaya Taps for Pediatric Patients - Last updated on January 25, 2018  
All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center