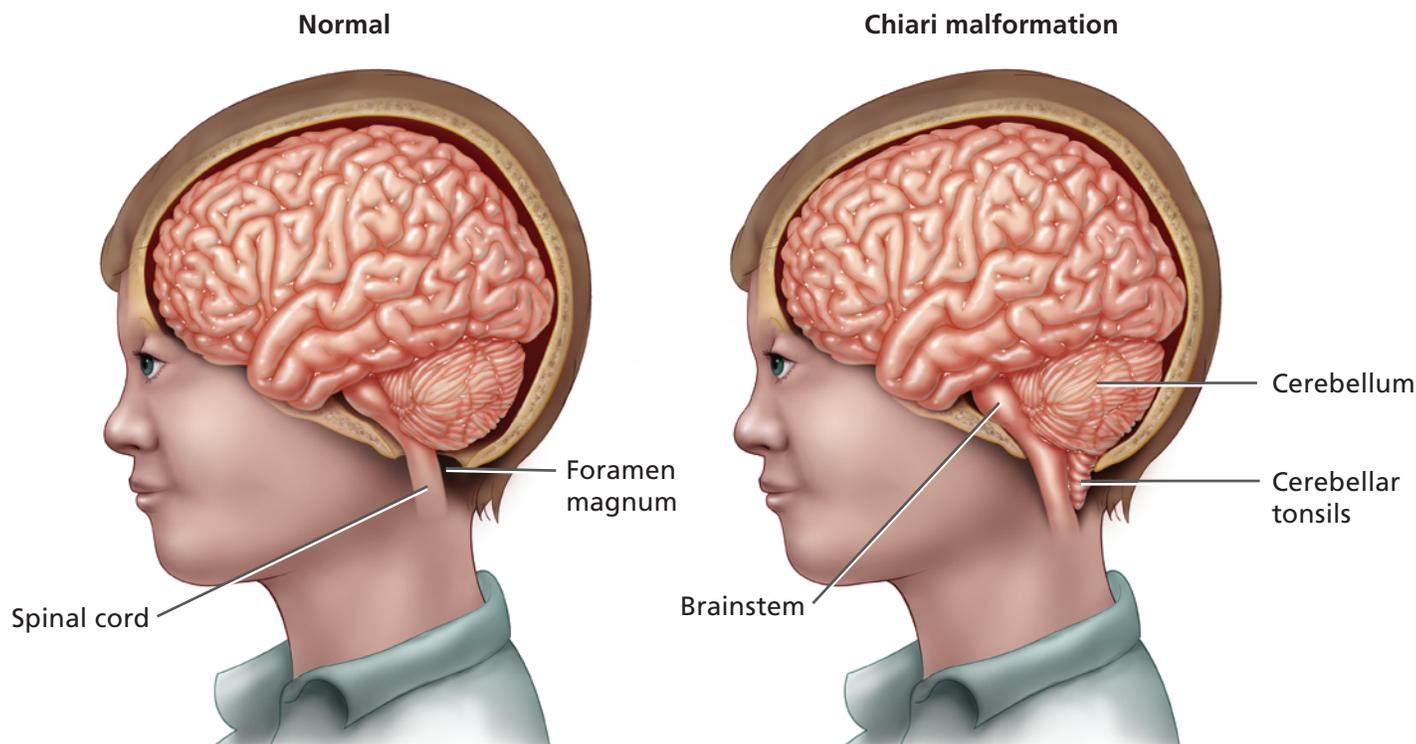


Let's Talk About...

Spina bifida and Chiari malformation



What is Chiari malformation?

In Chiari (kee-ARE-ee) malformation, the brainstem and cerebellum are pushed down because there is less space in the brain. Because the normal flow of fluid is blocked, it builds up and increases pressure on the brain.

There are four types of Chiari malformation. While type I is most common, type II is often associated with spina bifida.

What happens when my child has Chiari malformation?

In a normal skull, the cerebellum (which controls balance) sits just above the spine. When the space for the cerebellum is too small, part of the cerebellum squeezes down the foramen magnum, a hole beneath the skull. Part of the brainstem, which contains many nerves for the head, eyes, and neck, is pushed down as well.

A Chiari malformation can cause:

- The brainstem, spinal cord, and cerebellum to stop working properly
- Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) to stop flowing, which means less protection for the brain and spine
- Hydrocephalus (a buildup of CSF in the brain)

How do I know if my child has Chiari malformation?

If your child shows some or all of the following symptoms, have them checked for Chiari malformation:

- Headaches
- Difficulty breathing
- Not breathing (apnea)
- High-pitched noisy breathing (stridor)
- Problems swallowing or feeding (in babies)
- Arms that are weak and numb

