Aesculap Patient Information

Tom & Max
The best of friends through thick and thin
With best wishes
from your friends

Tom & Max
Hello, I’m Max.

Today I’m going to tell you the story of my friend Tom and the amazing hydrocephalus valve. Tom and I met in hospital, and we became friends straight away ...

... but let’s start at the beginning.
Tom is one of my best friends.
Wednesday is Tom's favourite day.
That's when his Mum cooks his favourite food, spaghetti with tomato sauce. And there's no school in the afternoon.

Tom does his homework in no time, plays on the computer, feeds Tiger the cat and then can't wait to get outside and play with his friends.

He especially likes Caroline, so he always brings her a lovely red apple.
I think he's fallen in love with her funny freckles.
But today everything’s different.

Tom is nowhere to be seen. Not in school, not at lunchtime, not at the computer and not in the garden. Everyone misses him a lot.

Today Tom’s lying in bed, he doesn’t want to run or play or learn. He feels giddy and so tired. His head aches and he feels really ill. This makes Tom very sad.

But what are good friends for? Everyone comes and tries to cheer him up. Even Tiger, Tom’s cat. Caroline even brings him a present. Guess what?

The nicest red apple she could find.
In the end, Tom’s Mum takes him to hospital.
She so much wants her little sunshine to get better again.

After examining Tom carefully, the doctor says mysteriously: ‘Tom, we’re going to take a couple of photos of your head now, so that we can find out why you’ve been having such bad headaches lately.’

The machine for taking the photos looks like a spaceship to Tom. He has to lie very still, so the photos don’t become blurred. ‘Look how well they've come out,' the doctor says. ‘You can see all of your head with some liquid inside it.’

The doctor explains to Tom that his head has got more liquid inside than other children. ‘The water is pressing on your head from the inside and that's why you’re getting these headaches. It's an illness called hydrocephalus. You get it when the liquid doesn't drain out of your head as it should.’
But don't worry about it, Tom. There's a special pediatric gravitational valve for hydrocephalus. We've helped lots of children with it already,' the doctor explains.

‘What is a gravitational valve?’ Tom wants to know. ‘A gravitational valve is a really clever valve attached to a tube. It drains the extra liquid away so your headaches disappear. We place it under the skin of children who've got hydrocephalus. The operation doesn't last very long at all, because the valve is so small. Afterwards you'll be able to play with your friends again and play sport. Because the valve lets you do anything you want,' explains the doctor, and goes on:

‘Today I'm going to give you Max. He wants to stay with you from now on. Every child with a pediatric gravitational valve gets one of these bears from me.'

So we became a team: Tom and me
Everything OK?' I ask Tom on the morning before his operation.

'Course,' Tom answers, 'I'm very excited. The doctor says I can't eat or drink anything till this evening. Not even Caroline's apple.'

A nice nurse gives Tom a small injection so that he can go off to sleep during the operation. Then the nurse takes Tom into the operating theatre. His Mum goes with him.

I can go as well, because I’m one of his best friends.
A week after the operation, Tom's back at home.
Granny and Grandad come to visit.
‘You won't believe it,’ Tom says, beaming all over his face. Then he tells them all about the operation and everything that happened to him in hospital.

‘Can you feel this gravitational valve with your finger?’ Granny asks.

‘Yes, feel here,’ Tom says and taps behind his ear with his finger. Tom proudly shows them his scar and the place where they can feel the gravitational valve beneath his skin.

Then Tom says: ‘Look, here's my new friend, Max.’ And he's so happy he throws me high up into the air.
A few days later we go back for a check up.
Hello Tom,' says the doctor, pleased to see his little patient again.

‘You’re looking really well. Today we're going to see if your wound has healed up nicely and check whether your gravitational valve is working properly. To do that we have to take a few more photos, but you know all about that by now.’

The doctor examines my friend and is very happy that he's feeling better now. And the photos show that the valve and the tube are draining the right amount of liquid away.

‘Well Tom, everything's fine and you can go back to school already,’ the doctor tells him.
Back at school, Tom's the centre of attention.
Everyone wants to see the little card he carries to show that he's got a gravitational valve now. And after school we set off happily for home.

Back home, Tom eats his way through a huge portion of spaghetti, plays on the computer, feeds Tiger the cat and then off we go …

…. out into the sunshine.

After all, we’ve got to get something for Caroline …
guess what?
A lovely red apple, of course!
Your patient identity card: