

Signs of Impending Brain Stem Herniation

Cushing's Triad

- Hypertension
- Bradycardia
- Respiratory irregularity
- Note: Blood pressure can rapidly decrease following an elevation in blood pressure as decompensation occurs

Loss of all brainstem reflexes (no pupillary response, no corneal response, no cough, no gag, no spontaneous respirations, no motor response)

When to Notify Iowa Donor Network of Patient's Change in Condition

- Signs of brain stem herniation appear as listed above
- Patient requires increased circulatory support (increase or addition of vasopressor support)
- EEG, nuclear brain scanning, or cerebral angiography ordered by physician
- Prior to brain death testing
- Grave prognosis given to family and/or as discussion of withdrawing care begins

How to Support a Patient through Brain Stem Herniation

The time period leading up to brain death can be very unstable for the patient. Preserving the opportunity for donation with early medical management can prevent secondary injury to organs. *How can we maximize the gift for the family and honor the patient's donation decision if the organs are not preserved for transplantation?*

To preserve the opportunity, monitor and treat to:

- Maintain blood pressure
- Normalize electrolytes
- Manage oxygenation and organ perfusion
- Balance fluid intake and output

All imminent deaths should be referred to IDN's 24-hour referral line:

800-831-4131