

Lumbar puncture

What is it?

A lumbar puncture (spinal tap) is a test performed to sample the fluid (CSF) around your brain and spinal cord for evidence of infection, inflammation, cancer, or bleeding. This test also measures the pressure of the CSF and is sometimes used for removal of a large volume of CSF for therapeutic purposes. The procedure will be performed by a doctor (radiologist) using x-ray guidance.

Before the procedure

Your doctor will explain the procedure to you and answer any questions that you may have about the procedure. Risks include, but are not limited to, the following: bleeding, infection, discomfort/bruising at the procedure site, (usually the lower back or neck), and headache. Most complications require only additional observation, although administration of fluids, medications or blood products may be needed. Rarely, surgery could be needed if a life-threatening complication is encountered. Spinal cord damage could result in paralysis or death. If you have a headache that lasts longer than 24 hours, please call the radiology nurse or the referring provider as you may need an epidural blood patch for symptom relief.

You will be asked to sign a consent giving permission to undergo the procedure.

Notify the doctor prior to the procedure if you have any drug allergies.

Inform the doctor if you have a bleeding disorder or if you take an anticoagulant (blood thinner), aspirin, ibuprofen, or any other medication that may affect blood clotting. In some cases, these medications may need to be temporarily discontinued prior to undergoing this procedure.

Force fluids for 24 hours prior to the lumbar puncture; as an inpatient, you may also be given some IV fluids before the procedure. This helps to increase the volume of CSF and increases the likelihood of a successful procedure.

Please make sure someone is available to drive you home (if done on an outpatient basis).

During the procedure

You will be placed on your stomach or rolled on your side for the procedure. Your skin will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution then draped to create a sterile field. Local anesthetic (e.g. lidocaine) will be used to numb the skin and soft tissue. This may cause a brief stinging sensation.

A needle will be inserted through the numbed area and into the spinal canal. You may feel some pressure as the needle is advanced into the appropriate position. Please notify the doctor if you feel any pain radiating into your legs.

A few x-rays will be taken to confirm appropriate location of the needle tip within spinal canal. Once the intrathecal compartment has been accessed, a small amount of CSF (normally around 10 cc) will be collected for laboratory testing. All samples will be sent to the lab for further assessment; final results will take several days and will be relayed to you by the doctor that requested this procedure.

After the procedure

If you are symptom free after the procedure, you will be able to leave the radiology department. Please notify the technologist if you are having any symptoms that you feel may be related to today's procedures.

Once you are medically cleared for discharge after the procedure, please make sure someone is available to drive you home.

Rest on your back with the head of the bed elevated ≤ 30 degrees for 6-8 hours after your procedure; light activity is recommended for the next 24-48 hours.

Drink large amounts of fluid for 24-48 hours following the procedure. It is also recommended to include caffeinated beverages (e.g. tea, soft drinks, and/or coffee) in order to help prevent a post procedure headache.

The needle insertion site may be sore for several days after the lumbar puncture. Take Tylenol or another pain reliever as recommended by your regular doctor, if needed for pain relief. Aspirin and certain other pain relievers could increase the risk of bleeding. Be sure to only take medications approved by your doctor.

If you discontinued a blood thinner prior to undergoing this procedure, please contact the doctor who sent you for this study to determine when you can safely resume taking this specific medication.

Notify your doctor or report to the ER if you experience any of the following:

- ❖ Fever and/or chills
- ❖ Redness, swelling, draining, or bleeding at the procedure site
- ❖ Worsening pain at the procedure site or elsewhere
- ❖ Shortness of breath and/or difficulty breathing

If you have any questions before and following your procedure call the Radiology nurse at 662-293-1404

Date: _____

(Patient Signature)

(Witness)