

## Neurosciences

# Lumbar puncture

A lumbar puncture is a procedure that involves using a needle to remove cerebrospinal fluid (CSF).

CSF is the fluid that surrounds your brain and spinal cord.

### Why you need a lumbar puncture

- To diagnose a neurological condition – your doctor can use your CSF to help diagnose your condition
- To treat a neurological condition – if your pressure of the CSF is too high, your doctors may do a lumbar puncture to remove some of the fluid

### Who does the lumbar puncture

One of the ward doctors will perform the lumbar puncture.

The doctor visit you before the procedure to talk about it with you. This is a good chance to ask any questions or talk about any worries you have about the procedure.

Your doctor will ask you to sign a consent form.



## Patient Information

### **You must have a blood test before a lumbar puncture**

You'll need to have a blood test (Full Blood Count and INR) before you can have a lumbar puncture.

We cannot proceed with your lumbar puncture without a blood test.

Please find the blood request form you need enclosed.

- Attend with the blood request form for this test to be done prior to your lumbar puncture
- For patients on warfarin, **only** INR needs to be no more than 1.3 for the procedure.)

### **If you're on blood-thinning medicines (anti-coagulants):**

Inform your consultant's secretary if you're on any anti-coagulants (such as aspirin or warfarin). You may need more blood tests before your lumbar puncture if you're on anti-coagulants.

- Contact the hospital switchboard on 024 7696 4000 and ask for your consultant's secretary
- Or contact the number given on your letter.

### **Before the procedure**

You do not need to stop eating or drinking before the lumbar puncture.

Tell your doctor if you're allergic to plasters.

Wear loose clothing or a hospital gown to your lumbar puncture.

### **During the procedure**

We'll ask you to lie down on your left side with your knees bent. You'll need to stay as still as possible in this position while you have a lumbar puncture.

## Patient Information

Once you are lying down in the correct position, the doctor will:

1. Clean an area on your back with antiseptic and give you an injection of local anaesthetic. The local anaesthetic will make the injected patch of skin go numb.
2. Insert a needle through the skin in the area between your spinal bones. This space contains the spinal fluid (CSF).
3. Attach a thin tube to the needle to measure the pressure of the CSF.
4. Let some fluid drip out from the needle so to collect and send to the lab to be tested.
5. Remove the needle and put a sticky plaster on your back.

## How long a lumbar puncture takes

The procedure takes around 15 to 20 minutes.

## Will it hurt?

The local anaesthetic will make the injected area of skin numb for about 45 minutes. So it won't hurt when the needle goes in.

- You may feel some pushing and pulling as the needle goes further in.
- Some people get a momentary shooting pain or electric shock feeling down their leg.

## After the lumbar puncture

You'll need to rest on the Ward for 2 hours after the lumbar puncture. You'll have a patient call bell to press if you need any help or support during this time.

Do not drive immediately after your lumbar puncture. Arrange for a friend or relative to go home with you after a lumbar puncture.

Wait at least 24 hours before swimming or bathing. #keep the area dry until the next day.

## Patient Information

Avoid strenuous activities and heavy lifting for at least 48 hours after the lumbar puncture.

### **Going back to work**

You can back to work 24 to 48 hours after a lumbar puncture.

### **If you develop a headache:**

- Do not go back to work until your headache has gone and you feel better.

### **Side-effects**

The most common side effects are:

- headaches, which can last for up to a week – you'll be given painkillers at the hospital if you need them
- swelling and lower back pain where the needle was inserted – this should get better on its own after a few days

### **Post lumbar puncture headache**

This type of headache usually comes on 1 or 2 days after having a lumbar puncture. It usually lasts for about 2 days.

A post lumbar puncture headache is made worse by standing up and is relieved by lying down.

If you get a headache after a lumbar puncture:

- rest in bed – lie down flat for as long as you need
- drink plenty of fluids, ideally water – drinks containing caffeine (tea or coffee) may help
- take simple painkillers such as paracetamol

## Patient Information

### **Risks**

A lumbar puncture is not dangerous. Serious side effects (meningitis or nerve root damage) after lumbar punctures are very rare.

If the doctors think you are at risk of developing serious side effects, they will not perform the LP.

### **What should I do if I feel unwell at home following the procedure?**

If you get a headache after your LP that lasts for more than 3 days, contact your GP or the doctors and nurses on the ward:

Phone: 024 7696 5233

Monday to Friday, 8am to 3pm.

Calling 024 7696 5233 or go to A&E if you experience:

- Double or blurred vision
- Loss of consciousness
- Drowsiness
- Weakness of your arms legs or face
- Bleeding from the area of the LP
- Vomiting.

### **More information**

If you have any questions, please ask the doctor or nurse looking after you.

### **Contact details**

Day Case Unit - 024 7696 5233

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact 024 7696 5233 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

## Patient Information

The Trust operates a smoke-free policy.

### Did we get it right?

We would like you to tell us what you think about our services. This helps us make further improvements and recognise members of staff who provide a good service.

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