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neurosciencegroup

Your Guide to Lumbar Puncture

What is a Lumbar Puncture?

A Lumbar Puncture or spinal tap is a procedure in which some of the fluid surrounding the spinal cord (called the cerebrospinal fluid or CSF) is taken out through a needle and examined in a laboratory.

How can a Lumbar Puncture help me?

A Lumbar Puncture can help to diagnosis disorders of the central nervous system.

Will I have pain during my Lumbar Puncture?

A Lumbar Puncture should not be painful, but you may have some back pain or a headache for a few days afterwards.

How do I prepare for my Lumbar Puncture?

Ensure your doctor knows if:

You are taking Coumadin or any other blood thinners: *Plavix, Aspirin, Eliquis, Excedrin, fish oil, etc.*

You are taking steroids and or antibiotics.

You have liver or kidney disease: *chronic kidney disease, cirrhosis, etc.*

You have the following implantable devices: *medication pump, pacemaker, defibrillator, or stimulator.*

You have any allergies: *anesthetic, iodine, adhesive, contrast, shellfish.*

You have any questions regarding your medication.

You have had or are planning to have a vaccine within 2 weeks of your procedure.

****Please call to cancel your appointment if you have a fever, the flu, covid, or any other infection****

What can I do the day of my Lumbar Puncture?

- **Drink 2-3 extra glasses of fluid for a few days prior to your lumbar puncture.**
- You may eat and drink normally; there is no need to fast.
- Take your normal medication on the day of your test, unless otherwise instructed.
- You will need to shower with antibacterial soap the day before and the day of your procedure.
- We suggest you do not plan any strenuous activity the day of your procedure.
- Do NOT apply lotions, creams, ointments, or gels the day of your procedure.
- Wear loose fitting and comfortable clothing.
- **Plan to be on bedrest for the rest of the day.**
- **Bring someone with you who can remain on campus to drive you home.**
(The length of the procedure itself is approximately 30-40 minutes).

What can I expect during the procedure?

You will need to be able to get yourself up onto the procedure table and position yourself on your stomach.

You will remain on your stomach for the entire length of the procedure.

The area of your injection will be cleansed with an antiseptic solution.

Your skin will be numbed with a local anesthetic.

A spinal needle will be placed using fluoroscopy (x-ray) guidance into the space where your cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) is found. This is well below the area where your spinal cord ends.

CSF is then collected. This can be a slow process depending on each individual person and how hydrated you are. Once the fluid is collected, the needle is removed, your back will be cleaned off, a band aid will be applied, and the procedure is complete.

What happens after my Lumbar Puncture?

- You will spend about 10 minutes in the recovery room reviewing post-procedure instructions with the nurse prior to discharging. You may require a longer stay in recovery if additional monitoring is necessary.
- **You will need to be bedrest the rest of the day.**
- Avoid sudden position changes, coughing, sneezing, and straining with bowel movements.
- You will NOT be able to drive or operate heavy machinery for the rest of the day.
- You may experience a spinal headache/post-lumbar headache which may occur in the first 24-72 hours after your procedure and can last up to 7 days. If you experience a spinal headache: Lie down-the headache should subside (characteristic of spinal headache). Drink plenty of fluids. Try taking 1-2 tablets of acetaminophen (Tylenol) by mouth every 4-6 hours (unless contraindicated) as may help take the edge off the headache, but it will not resolve the headache completely. Small to moderate amount of caffeine-if tolerable (unless contraindicated). **Call your physician if your headache lasts more than 2 days or if you develop a fever.**
- You can shower after your procedure. However, NO SOAKING in tub, hot tub, pool, etc. for 24 hours.
- You may return to work the following day.

**Questions about your lumbar puncture procedure?
Call Heather, our Physiatry Nurse Navigator, 920-725-9373**