

Lumbar Puncture

What is a lumbar puncture?

A lumbar puncture is a procedure done to draw a sample of fluid from the space that surrounds the spinal cord and nerve roots. The fluid is called cerebrospinal fluid or CSF and can be checked for health problems. This procedure is also called an LP, spinal puncture or spinal tap.

To Prepare

- Tell your doctor about the medicines you take, including prescription and over the counter medicines, vitamins, minerals or other herbal supplements.
- **If you are taking a medicine that thins your blood**, talk to your doctor about when you should stop taking the medicine before the procedure. These medicines include:
 - ▶ aspirin (high dose)
 - ▶ aspirin with dipyridamole (Aggrenox)
 - ▶ cilostazol (Pletal)
 - ▶ clopidogrel (Plavix)
 - ▶ dalteparin (Fragmin)
 - ▶ dipyridamole (Persantine)
 - ▶ enoxaparin (Lovenox)
 - ▶ foundaparinux (Arixtra)
 - ▶ heparin
 - ▶ prasugrel (Effient)
 - ▶ ticlopidine (Ticlid)
 - ▶ tinzaparin (Innohep)
 - ▶ warfarin (Coumadin, Jantoven)
- Bring lists of the medicines you take and your allergies to give to the technologist when you arrive.

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Learn more about your health care.

- Bring your insurance card with you to the hospital.
- Have an adult with you to take you home after the procedure. For your safety, you may **not** drive yourself home, go home alone or use public transportation without someone to go with you.

The Day of the Procedure

- Do not eat or drink anything for 4 hours before the procedure.
- Take your regular medicines, except for blood thinners and metformin, with a sip of water.
- Wear comfortable, loose clothing without snaps or zippers for the procedure. Do not wear jewelry. This includes watches, wedding bands, and any form of piercing.

Where to Go for the Procedure

- OSU Medical Center – Go to Radiology Registration on the 2nd floor of Doan Hall to check in.
- **Please check with your doctor if you need blood work before this procedure.** If you have already had blood work done or do not need it, you should **arrive 1 hour before your appointment time.**
 - ▶ If you are 50 or older, you will need blood work done within 30 days of your procedure date. It is best for the blood work to be done prior to the procedure date. Please check with your doctor's office for instructions and lab orders. If you have labs at a location outside of the OSUMC system, please bring a copy of the results with you to your procedure.
 - ▶ If you are taking blood thinning medicines or have a blood disorder, you will need blood work on the day of the procedure. Please get a lab order from your doctor.
 - ▶ If you need blood work on the day of the procedure, **you must arrive 2 hours before your appointment time.**
 - ▶ If you are late for your scheduled appointment time, you may be asked to reschedule, especially if you need a blood test.

If you are **pregnant** or **think you may be pregnant**, tell the technologist before this procedure.

During the Procedure

- The procedure is most often done while you are in bed in your room, but it can also be done using x-ray in the radiology department.
- The procedure will last about 1 hour. You will be asked to stay lying in the procedure room or on a cart for 1 hour after the procedure.
- You may be asked to:
 - Lie on your left side with your knees up to your stomach as far as possible.
 - Sit on the side of the bed and lean over.
 - Lie on your stomach. This is the method used by the radiology department for the x-ray.
- The doctor will clean your lower back with a cleaning solution. A numbing medicine called lidocaine (a local anesthetic) will be injected into this area of your back. Please let the doctor or nurse know if you have an **allergy** to this medicine. The numbing medicine may burn like a bee sting for a few seconds.
- A needle will be inserted into the space between the backbones (vertebrae), below the level of the spinal cord. The needle does not go into your spinal cord. You may feel some discomfort or pressure during this part of the procedure. This pressure is from the needle moving into the spinal canal.
- Breathe slowly and deeply. Relax and try not to move.
- After the needle is in the correct place, cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) samples will be collected. This can take anywhere from 5 to 30 minutes depending on the amount of fluid required for the tests ordered by your doctor. CSF often exits the needle at a slow drip.
- The needle will then be removed and a bandage will be placed over the area. The excess soap will be wiped off of your back.
- If you feel sharp pain, numbness or tingling at any time, let the staff know.

Your Care after the Lumbar Puncture

In Hospital Care

- You will lie flat for one hour after the procedure. The head of the bed should be flat.
- For your safety, please ask for help the first time you need to use the bathroom.
- A nurse or technologist will check your blood pressure, heart rate and breathing (vital signs) after one hour or before you leave.

Outpatient Care

- You should lie in the back seat during the drive home.
- Once you are home, you should lay down for at least an hour with your head kept flat or propped up by only 1 pillow. You can get up to go to the bathroom.
- Drink plenty of liquids, especially water and caffeinated beverages. This will help you avoid a slight headache that sometimes occurs for a few hours after this procedure.
- If you do develop a headache, take a non-prescription pain reliever such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
- Avoid exercise or strenuous activity for 24 hours.

Call Your Doctor

Although problems from this procedure are rare, they can occur. Call your doctor **right away** if you have any of these signs:

- Severe headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Temperature above 101 degrees
- Numbness or tingling in the lower legs
- Increase in back pain

If your doctor is not available and you are having problems, visit your nearest emergency department.