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A guide to...

Lumbar Puncture

Patient Information

If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01923 217 187** or email westherts.pals@nhs.net



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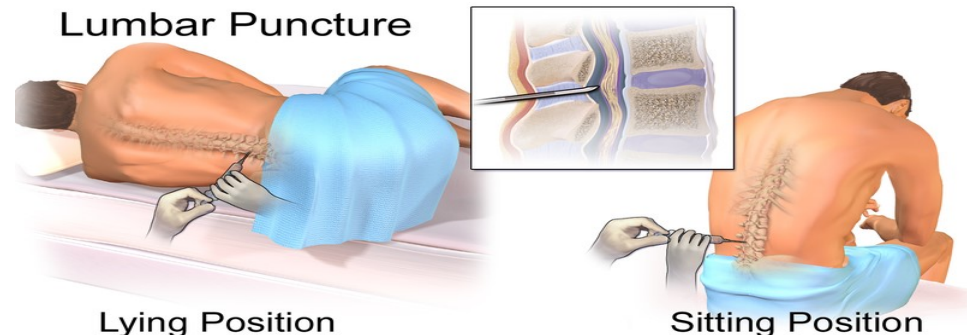


What is a Lumbar Puncture?

- A lumbar puncture is a procedure used to obtain a sample of Cerebrospinal Fluid (CSF).
- Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) is a clear, colourless bodily fluid found in the brain and spine.
- The procedure involves inserting a thin needle in the lower back to obtain CSF specimen to be sent to the laboratory for analysis.
- What are the reasons for a lumbar puncture?
- A sample of CSF can give information about a range of conditions which may affect the brain and spinal cord.
- If you are not sure why you are having a lumbar puncture, please feel free to ask the doctor who is performing the procedure.
- You will be asked to consent prior to having the lumbar puncture by the doctor performing it.

How is the procedure performed?

- Normally, a patient is placed in a side lying position with the knees bent and positioned as close to the chest as possible. This is referred to as the foetal like position which also involves the head being bent downwards.
- Sometimes, the lumbar puncture is performed with the patient sitting up with their head resting on a table supported by a pillow.
- After positioning the patient, the doctor will then determine the area to which he or she will insert the needle. This may take a few minutes and involves feeling the surrounding area.
- The site will then be cleansed with an antiseptic solution. The solution might feel cold at first contact.
- The area will then be anaesthetised with lignocaine 2% using a fine needle to introduce the solution.
- Once the area is sufficiently numb, the spinal needle will be introduced. You may feel a sensation of pushing and or pressure at this stage.



What happens after the procedure?

- You will usually be asked to lie flat for 30 minutes
- Increase your fluid intake.
- Your nurse will check your vital signs and make sure you are comfortable and safe.
- If your vital signs are normal and if you are feeling well, then you will be discharged home.

What are the possible side effects of Lumbar Puncture?

- Post-LP headache caused by the removal of CSF. This can be managed usually by lying down, taking over-the-counter painkillers and increasing fluid intake.
- Back soreness or ache, which should settle in a few days.
- Bleeding at the puncture site.
- **Please inform the doctor before undergoing the procedure if you have a bleeding disorder or taking any anticoagulants such as warfarin, rivaroxaban, dagibatran, clopidogrel or aspirin.**
- Infection, this is very rare as the procedure is done using sterile conditions.
- Nerve damage is an extremely rare risk.