

## What is Lumbar Puncture and how is it done?

Spinal tap or lumbar puncture is a test:

- To measure the amount of pressure in the spinal canal
- To remove a small amount of cerebral spinal fluid (CSF) for testing
- That uses a special needle to be used for the spinal tap
- That can be performed in any person at any age from newborn to the elderly
- That can be completed within 5-10 minutes

## What is the purpose?

- Diagnostic – measure spinal fluid pressure and obtain CSF for laboratory analysis
- Therapeutic – injection of medication – spinal anesthesia

## Possible complication of lumbar puncture:

You have may some or all of the following temporarily, but they will disappear soon.

- Back pain
- Headache
- Nausea
- Swelling or hardness at puncture site (rarely happens).

## Pre-procedure precaution

- No special preparations are needed from the patient before the conduct of the spinal tap

## During the procedure

- You will be asked to lie on your side with your legs and hips bent (flexed) up toward your chest and your neck slightly bent forward. This position is called the fetal position. Alternatively, it can be done in a sitting position
- Sterile equipment is used to minimize any risk of infection

- Local anesthetic (lidocaine) may be used
- You should inform the doctor right away if you feel any pain.
- The collected fluid is sent to the laboratory for evaluation

## Post-procedure precautions

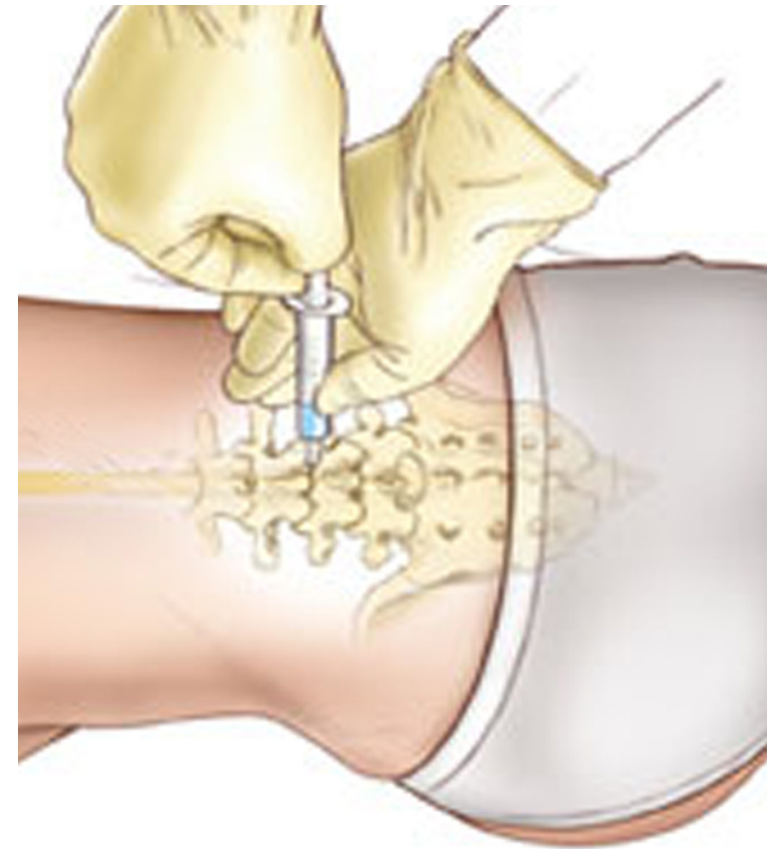
- Lying flat in bed for 30 minutes to one hour may help to prevent you getting a headache
- Drinking fluids especially caffeine products such as tea, coffee and cola can also help to reduce headaches
- Your punctured site may be sore for 1-2 days

## When should you contact your doctor?

See your doctor if you have any of these:

- Infection – Rarely, infection at the site where the needle is inserted may occur. This will include redness, swelling, tenderness or pus at the puncture site
- Headache – This can occur after the spinal tap, and occasionally, maybe severe

If you experience these symptoms, you should contact your doctor. If you are unable to reach your doctor, go immediately to the emergency department.



**Neurology Department**

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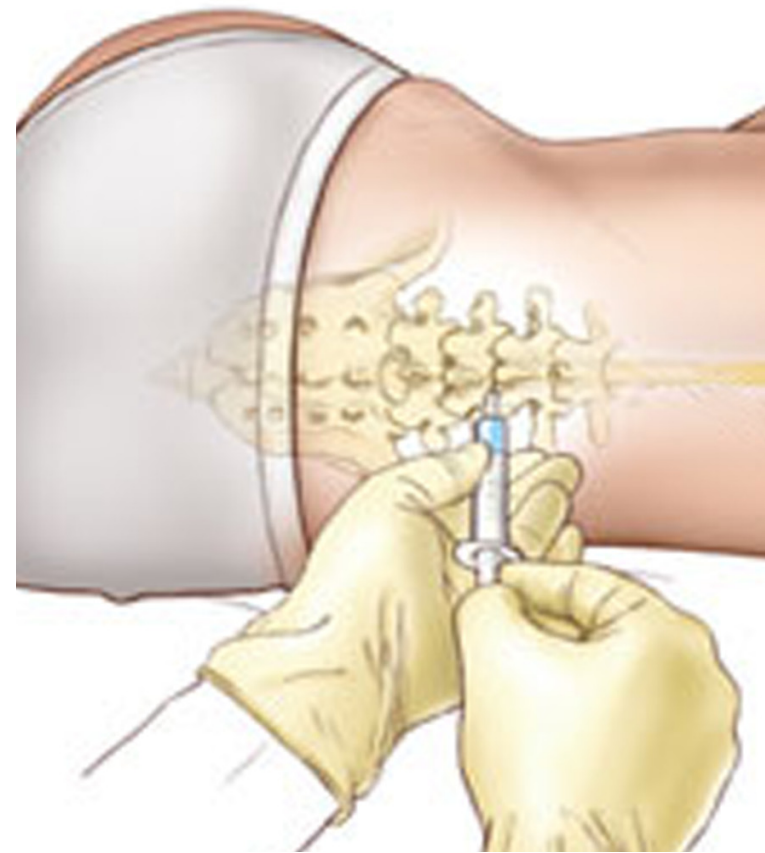
**Patient and Family Education Committee**

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