Lumbar Puncture

Please review all the instructions about your test and prep as soon as you get them, so you can prepare. You may need to change some of your medicines.

Arrange to have an adult to drive you to your test and be there to take you home after the test. If you are taking a cab, bus or medical transportation service home after the procedure, an adult, other than the driver, needs to ride with you for your safety.

If you have any questions or you need to cancel or change your test appointment, call 614-293-4333.

About the test

A lumbar puncture (LP) is a test that draws 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 a spinal puncture or spinal tap.

Preparing for the test

• Talk to your doctor about the medicines you take, including prescription and over the counter medicines, vitamins, minerals or other herbal supplements.

• If you are age 50 or older, you must have blood work done within 30 days of your appointment. Get a lab order from your doctor and then bring the results with you.

• If you take a blood thinner or medicine that thins your blood, talk to your doctor about when to stop taking the medicine before the test. Not talking to your doctor about this could result in your test being cancelled or rescheduled.

If you have a stent or certain other health problems, stopping these medicines may put you at risk. Your doctor may make changes to your medicine before this test.

These medicines include:

- High dose aspirin and products that contain aspirin, such as Aggrenox (aspirin with dipyridamole)
- Heparin
- Fragmin (Dalteparin)
- Innohep (Tinzaparin)
- Arixtra (Foundaparinux)
- Brilinta (Ticagrelor)
- Coumadin (Warfarin)
- Effient (Prasugrel)
- Eliquis (Apixaban)
- Lovenox (Enoxaparin)
- Plavix (Clopidogrel)
- Pletal (Cilostazol)
- Pradaxa (Dabigatran)
- Savaysa (Edoxaban)
- Ticlid (Ticlopidine)
- Xarelto (Rivaroxaban)

• If you take blood thinner medicines or have a bleeding disorder, you will need blood work on the day of the procedure. Please get a lab order from your doctor and arrive 2 hours before your scheduled test time.
The day of your test

- **Plan to be at the hospital for about 2 hours** the day of the LP, or 4 hours if you need to have blood work done before the test. The test is about 45 minutes and you will have 1 hour for recovery.

- **Arrive 15 to 30 minutes before your scheduled time for the procedure or 2 hours before if you need blood work done.**

- 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.

- Bring a list of the medicines you take and your allergies to give to the technologist when you arrive.

- Bring your insurance card and photo ID with you to the hospital.

- **If you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant,** call your doctor as this test will likely be rescheduled.

During the test

- The LP can be done in your hospital bed or using x-ray in the radiology department. 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.

- The doctor will clean your lower back with a special soap. A numbing medicine will be injected into your back. Please let the doctor or nurse know if you have any allergies. The numbing medicine may burn like a bee sting for a few seconds.

- A needle is put into the space between the backbones or vertebrae, below the level of the spinal cord. The needle does not go into your spinal cord. You may feel some discomfort or pressure from the needle moving into the space.

- Breathe slowly and deeply. Relax and try not to move.

- After the needle is in the correct place, cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) will be collected. This can take anywhere from 5 to 20 minutes based on the amount of fluid needed 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 site. The excess soap will be wiped off of your back.

- **If you feel sharp pain, numbness or tingling at any time, tell the staff.**
Care after the test

Recovery

- You will lie flat for 1 hour. The head of the bed should be flat.
- For your safety, 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) before you leave.

At home

- Once you are home, if you have a headache, you may be more comfortable if you 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 may help you avoid the headache that sometimes occurs after this procedure.
- If you have a headache, take a non-prescription pain reliever, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Follow the directions on the label for use.
- Avoid exercise and strenuous activity for 24 hours.
- Remove the dressing from the site the day after the test.

When to call your doctor

Although problems 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 F or 38 degrees C
- Numbness or tingling in the lower legs
- Increase in back pain

If your doctor is not available and you are having problems, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.