

Lumbar Puncture

Information for patients and families

Read this information to learn:

- what lumbar puncture is
- what to do before the procedure
- what to expect
- what you can do when you get home
- what problems to look out for



What is lumbar puncture?

Lumbar puncture is a procedure that takes a sample of your cerebrospinal fluid (CSF). CSF is the fluid that surrounds your brain, spinal cord, and nerves.

Why do I need to have one?

Some illnesses that affect your nervous system cause changes in your CSF. Looking at your sample helps your doctor check for any changes. This can help them to diagnose an illness.

What should I do before the procedure?

- If you are taking an anti-coagulation (blood thinning) injection, talk to your primary health care provider and ask if you need to stop taking your injection on the day of the procedure.
- Bring your health card (OHIP card) to your appointment. If you do not have an OHIP card, please bring another form of government-issued photo ID (such as a driver's license, passport, or other provincial health card).
- Ask a friend or family member to come with you. You **MUST** have someone take you home after the procedure.
- Check in at the Endoscopy/GI Unit reception desk at Toronto Western Hospital **1 hour before your procedure**. The reception desk is on the 4th floor, East Wing. The East Wing elevators are near the Leonard St. entrance.

If you need to cancel the test, please call your doctor and the Endoscopy/GI Unit at **416 603 5928**.

If your procedure is scheduled to be done at Medical Imaging:

- Check in at the Medical Imaging reception desk at Toronto Western Hospital **1 hour before your procedure**. The reception desk is on the 3rd floor, East Wing. The East Wing elevators are near the Leonard St. entrance.

If you need to cancel this test, call your Physician and also notify the booking office at **416 340 3384**.

What can I expect?

Before your procedure, your doctor will talk to you about any possible risks. When you are ready to begin:

1. We will ask you to pull your knees as close to your chest as possible. Your chin should touch your chest.
2. We will use a needle to give you a local anesthetic in the centre of your lower back. This medicine will numb that area.
3. When the area is numb, we will insert (put in) a needle that will take out the CSF sample.
4. Once we have a sample, we will remove the needle. We will then put a Band-Aid on the puncture site.
5. We will ask you to lie flat on your back for 30 to 60 minutes. This will help you avoid getting a headache after the procedure.
6. After this time, you will be discharged from the hospital.

Are there any side effects?

You may have a headache after the procedure.

This is normal. If you have a headache:

- rest for a few hours when you get home
- drink lots of fluids
- use a mild pain medicine like regular Tylenol

What can I do when I get home?

- **Don't lift anything over 10 pounds (5 kilograms).** Avoid doing any tiring physical activity for 48 hours (for example, NO exercising, heavy lifting or repeated bending).
- You can eat and drink as normal.
- Drink lots of fluids (about 4 to 6 cups a day).
- You can remove the Band-Aid on your puncture site the next day.
- You can take a shower the next day.
- Do not take a hot bath, or use a hot tub or sauna for at least 48 hours.

What problems should I look out for?



Call your family doctor or go to the nearest emergency room if you:

- have any pain, redness or oozing (fluid) at your puncture site
- have a fever or still have a headache after taking 2 regular strength Tylenol pills
- feel weak or have difficulty with your bowel or bladder

When will I get the results?

Your doctor will give you your results as soon as they are available.



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