

What Do I Need to Do Following the Procedure to Prevent Infection?

Your clinician will place a Band-Aid on the spot where the needle was placed to help prevent infection.

- Keep the bandaid dry for the first night. You may shower or bathe the next day. Remove the bandaid from your back the morning after the lumbar puncture. Do not leave the bandaid on any longer. Do not put on another bandaid.



Call your doctor if you notice any of the following:

- Sudden fever, chills, or stiff neck.
- Signs of infection at the site of the puncture on your back (redness, pain, pus, drainage of any kind).
- Headache that lasts for more than 3 days or keeps getting worse or makes it hard for you do to your normal activities.
- Loss of strength or feeling in your legs.
- Problems passing urine.

Lumbar Puncture

Follow up appointment
in _____ days/weeks

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What Is Lumbar Puncture?

A Lumbar Puncture (LP, or Spinal Tap) is the insertion of a needle into the lumbar region (lower back). The needle goes into a space below the spinal cord to withdraw a sample of cerebral spinal fluid or to give spinal medications.

How Do I Prepare for a Lumbar Puncture?

No preparation is necessary, but your clinician should discuss the procedure beforehand and have you sign a consent form before the procedure is done.

What Are the Risks Associated With This Procedure?

The procedure is very safe, and serious side effects are rare. Some complications can occur.

- You will feel some discomfort as the local anesthesia is injected over the site.
- Another common side effect is a temporary headache, and your clinician may have you lie on your back for 1 to 2 hours after the procedure to lessen the chance of getting this effect.
- Other possible complications are very rare and include infection, bleeding, formation of blood clot around the spinal cord and seizures.

What Happens During the Procedure?

- The LP will be done at your bedside, or at a clinic.
- You will be positioned at the edge of the bed on your side with your knees drawn up. This position helps to widen the space between the bones of the spine allowing the needle to be inserted more easily. The LP may sometimes be done in a sitting position.
- Your lower back will be cleansed with an antiseptic solution. You will then feel a small pinprick as the doctor injects a small amount of freezing.
- Once the area is frozen, the doctor will insert a needle into the space in the lumbar region, and will either collect a small amount of fluid (about 2 teaspoons or 10ml) or inject a medication depending on the reason for your LP.
You may feel some pressure as the needle is inserted. The needle will then be removed and a bandaid will be applied to the site.
- This procedure requires approximately 15-20 minutes.

After the lumbar puncture

- After the procedure, you may or may not be asked to stay flat in bed for 30 to 60 minutes.
- You will be checked frequently after the procedure by a nurse.
- You may be up and around after you go home but should not do any strenuous activities such as lifting, jogging, heavy chores at home or at work.
- While most people do not have a headache after a lumbar puncture, 15% to 20% will experience some headache. The headache usually happens only when you are sitting or standing.
If you do have a headache, simply lie down flat. If the headache returns when you stand up, lie back down. In most cases the headache will go away in 2 to 3 days.
- Drink 8 to 10 glasses of clear fluid each day (water, apple juice, cranberry juice, ginger ale, etc.). This may help to prevent a headache and will help relieve a headache if you do have one.
- You may take pain pills if you wish. Use whatever pills you normally use, such as Tylenol. Avoid medications such as Aspirin, or Advil to prevent bleeding.