

Lumbar Puncture

Lumbar puncture, also called a spinal tap, is a test where a small amount of fluid is removed from the space around the spinal cord. The fluid is tested for problems.

An adult family member or friend needs to come with you to take you home after the test. It is not safe for you to drive or leave alone.

Arrive on time for your test. Plan on being here for about 2 hours. The test takes about 45 minutes.

During the Test

- You will wear a hospital gown.
- You lie on your side at the edge of a table.
- The staff helps you into position. Pull your knees up to your chest. Bend your head down so your chin touches your chest.
- The doctor cleans your lower back. This may feel cold.
- Numbing medicine is put into the skin on your back. This may sting.
- When the skin is numb, a needle is placed between the bones of your spine to get the fluid.
- You may feel some pressure but no pain. Breathe slowly and deeply.
- **While the needle is in place, you must lie very still.**
- Fluid is removed through the needle.
- The needle is taken out and a band-aid is put on the site.



After the Test

- Medicines given during the test will make you sleepy. You will need to have an adult family member or friend take you home for your safety.
- Lie down in the back seat on the ride home.
- Once home, lie down for at least one hour with your head flat or only on one pillow.

- You can get up to go to the toilet.
- Drink plenty of liquids to avoid a headache.
- Test results are sent to your doctor. Your doctor will share the results with you.

Call your doctor **right away** if you have:

- A severe headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- A fever
- Numbness or tingling in your legs
- More back pain

Call 911 **right away** if you have excessive bleeding or drainage at the site.

Talk with your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.