

## Department of Neurosciences

# Lumbar puncture

### What is a lumbar puncture?

A lumbar puncture is a procedure where a sample of cerebrospinal fluid is taken for testing. Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) is the fluid that surrounds the brain and spinal cord. The procedure involves putting a needle into your back to draw out some of the fluid. This test helps to diagnose some conditions of the brain and spinal cord.

The lumbar puncture can also be performed after some types of neurosurgical procedures to reduce the fluid pressure in the head and promote wound healing, or it can be used simply to drain some excess CSF.

### Having a lumbar puncture

The procedure will be performed by a doctor or clinical nurse practitioner and will take about 30 minutes to one hour.

You will be asked to lie on your side with your legs pulled up and your chin tucked down, so that your back is curved. Sometimes the procedure is done when you are sitting up and leaning forward on some pillows. You will need to keep still and stay in the same position during the procedure.

The doctor or clinical nurse practitioner will clean an area of the small of your back with antiseptic. Local anaesthetic will then be injected and while this may sting a bit at first, it soon makes the skin numb.

The doctor or clinical nurse practitioner will then insert a needle through the skin into the space just below where the spinal cord ends. When the needle is in the right place CSF samples will be taken or collected into a sterile pot.

If the doctor or clinical nurse practitioner needs to measure the pressure of the CSF, they attach a special tube, called a manometer, to the needle to check the pressure of the fluid coming out. After the needle is removed, a plaster or small dressing will be put over the site.

### After the lumbar puncture

Some people develop a low pressure headache after the test. It can take up to 24 hours after the lumbar puncture for the headache to develop and up to a week to subside so do not be alarmed. You are advised to lie down for at least 30 minutes after the test as this

makes headaches less likely to develop. Drink plenty of fluids and take Paracetamol tablets to ease the pain as needed. If the headache persists and does not improve after a week, please contact your GP.

As with any invasive procedures there is some risk; but infection or bleeding of the site of needle entry is very rare.

## If you have any more questions about the procedure, please contact:

Ward A4 on 01223 217216. Please ask for Karen May, the Neurology Clinical Nurse Practitioner, or the nurse in-charge of the ward.

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format: 01223 216032 or [patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)

Potete chiedere di ottenere queste informazioni in altre lingue, in stampato grande o in audiocassetta.

### Italian

若你需要本信息的繁體中文、大字體或音訊格式的版本，請要求索取。

### Cantonese

तमने आ माळिती बीछ भाषाओमां, मोटा अक्षरोमां अथवा सांभली शकाय जेवा माध्यम (ओडीओ इमेज)मां जेठती छोय तो कृपा करीने पूछो.

### Gujarati

تکایه پرسیار بکه نه گهر نه وزانیاریهت دهوی به زمانیکی تر ، به پیتی گهره یانیش به شیوهی دهنگ

### Kurdish

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات دوسری زبانوں میں، بڑے الفاظ کی اشاعت میں یا آڈیو ٹیپ پر درکار ہوں تو براۓ مہربانی اس کیلئے درخواست کریں۔

### Urdu



Addenbrooke's is smoke-free. Please do not smoke anywhere on the site.

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### Document history

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