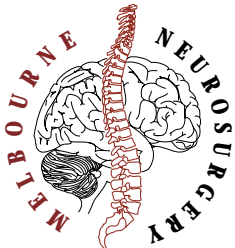


PROCEDURE INFORMATION

LUMBAR PUNCTURE



WHAT IS A LUMBAR PUNCTURE?

A Lumbar puncture is where a special needle is inserted into the fluid around the spinal nerve roots in the low back. Sometimes the procedure is known as a SPINAL TAP.

WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR HAVING A LUMBAR PUNCTURE ?

1. To sample the fluid that bathes the spinal cord and brain called cerebrospinal fluid (C.S.F)
2. To inject something into the C.S.F.
3. To measure the pressure of the C.S.F.
4. To drain away some of the C.S.F.

WHAT INFORMATION CAN BE GAINED ?

The condition of the brain and spinal cord can sometimes be discovered from studying the fluid around it.

This test can help in the diagnosis of neurological disorders such as multiple sclerosis and meningitis.

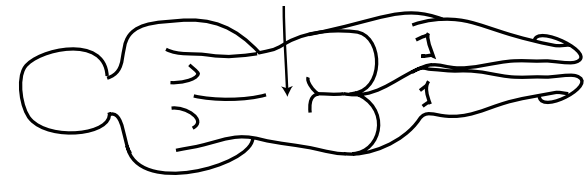
In neurosurgery it can be helpful in the diagnosis of some tumour conditions and hydrocephalus.

HOW IS IT PERFORMED ?

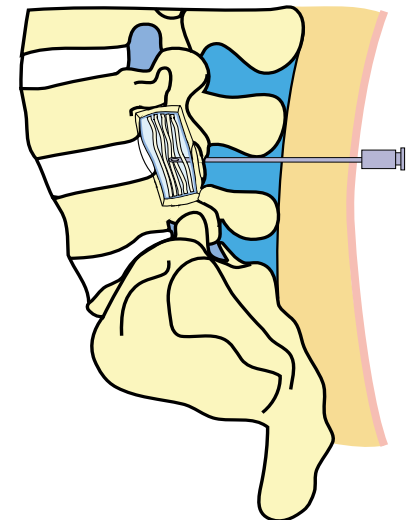
The test is performed by a doctor and happens either in the surgery or in a hospital. Sometimes it will be performed in an X ray department.

You will be either sitting or lying on your side, if you are on your side then your knees may be tucked up under your chin. The place for the needle is prepared with antiseptic to prevent infection .

Local anaesthetic may be injected into the area to numb it prior to the needle being inserted.



The needle is then pushed through the layers of the back to the membrane lining the lumbar nerve roots. This may sting a little but it is important not to move.





The needle has a solid centre and this is removed to sample the fluid.

If the pressure is being measured then you will be lying on your side and will be asked to straighten your legs.

Once the sample is taken or substance injected the needle is removed.

A bandaid is all that is needed to cover the wound.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO AFTER ?

You will usually rest in bed for 4 hours to reduce the risk of headache from the fluid leaking.

You will then be able to go home.

Somebody should drive you home.

Until the next day it would be advisable not to exercise.

WHAT SHOULD YOU NOTIFY YOUR DOCTOR OF AFTER ?

- 1. INCREASING HEADACHE**
- 2. INCREASING DROWSINESS**
- 3. FEVER**
- 4. SEIZURES**
- 5. WEAKNESS IN LEG/S**

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

The risks are very small

With the needle going in a nerve may get caught and this may give pain or tingling down the leg. This is transient and disappears when the needle is removed.

Infection is a theoretical risk but almost never seen.

If you have a bleeding problem or are taking a medication to thin your blood then there is a risk of bleeding at the area and developing weakness in the legs. It is important to tell the doctor if you are on blood thinning tablets such as aspirin/warfarin /anti- inflammatory drugs.

Headache is the commonest side effect because a small hole is left when the needle is removed. The fluid may leak into the tissue around the spine, dropping the pressure in the head. This usually resolves in 24 hours or less.

Seizure

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