



**Consultants in Neurology**  
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## **LUMBAR PUNCTURE (SPINAL TAP) PATIENT INFORMATION**

A lumbar puncture (spinal tap or LP) is a sterile procedure done by a doctor. Some of the fluid around your spinal cord is drained out of your body through a needle placed in your lower back. The fluid can be analyzed in a lab to assist with evaluating many conditions. The pressure of the fluid in your system can also be measured. Results can help to evaluate many different conditions including headaches, multiple sclerosis, bleeding, and infections. Sometimes medications or diagnostic testing agents can be given into the space around your spinal cord (such as in a myelogram). Some conditions (such as intracranial hypertension) can be helped by the drainage of fluid.

You will either lie or sit on a table with your back curved or arched (bending forward if sitting, “curled up” if lying). The only thing you need to do is to stay in that position, as still and relaxed as you can be. Your skin will be cleaned and sterilized. Numbing medication will be injected under your skin around the area. This usually stings a little for a short time and then the area is numbed. After numbing, the doctor will insert a special needle and drain the fluid.

Someone else should drive you to the procedure and home afterwards.

You will need to sign a consent form before the procedure.

After the procedure you will lie flat on the table for a period of time (depending on who does your procedure, you may stay at the facility for 30 minutes to several hours). You should recline your seat in the car on the way home if possible. Once home, you should stay on bed rest the rest of the day, lying flat.

You may take Tylenol (acetaminophen) for pain, but do not take aspirin, ibuprofen, or other medications that may prevent proper healing or lead to easy bleeding. Drink plenty of fluids, especially caffeinated beverages (you may get up for short periods to use the restroom).

Some people experience a headache after the procedure. Generally these headaches are better when lying down and worse when sitting or standing. If you have a severe problem with headache lasting beyond 48 hours after the tap, contact our office. Usually the headaches will go away if you remain on bed rest and continue to drink lots of fluids, especially caffeinated beverages. A procedure called a “blood patch” can be done and often this relieves the headache.

Also report to our office any signs of infection including: redness, heat, swelling, pus, or drainage at the puncture site; high fever; stiff neck; or other problems.

Results are usually available within 2 weeks. A follow up appointment should be made to discuss results.