

Lumbar Puncture



Information for Patients

UHN

What is the purpose of lumbar puncture?

To take a sample of the fluid which surrounds the brain, spinal cord, and nerves. Changes in this cerebrospinal fluid (also called spinal fluid) occur in some illnesses affecting the nervous system, and these changes can help in making a diagnosis.

What will happen?

You need to check in at the Medical/Surgical Day Unit Reception Desk at the Toronto Western Hospital, located on 4th floor, Main Pavilion (Centre Elevators) one hour prior to the scheduled procedure. Please bring your Health Card and hospital blue card on the day of the procedure.

You will need to bring an escort with you who will be able to take you home after the procedure.

The procedure and possible risks involved will be explained to you before the lumbar puncture. During the procedure you will be asked to keep your knees pulled up as close to your chest as possible and chin touching your chest. Local anaesthetic is injected into the skin in the centre of the lower back. When the area becomes insensitive, another needle is inserted through this area to obtain the spinal fluid. After the fluid is withdrawn, the needle removed, a band-aid will be applied to the puncture site that may be removed a few hours later. After the procedure you will be asked to lie flat on your back for 2 hours to prevent possible headache and then may be discharged from hospital.

Results

Your doctor will give you your results as soon as they are available.

This information is to be used for informational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Please consult your health care provider for advice about a specific medical condition. A single copy of these materials may be reprinted for non-commercial personal use only.

© 2003 University Health Network. All rights reserved.

Author: Sonia Sarkissian, Acute Care Nurse Practitioner, Krembil Neuroscience Program

Created: 08/2004

Form: D-5000 (09/2004)



Complications

Headache can sometimes be experienced. This can be relieved by resting for few hours or by the use of mild painkillers. Rare cases of infection have been reported after a lumbar puncture. An instruction sheet will be provided to you after the procedure regarding activity, diet, etc. or situations that may require medical attention.

Developed - 2000 Revised - 2004