

Lumber Puncture

Patient Information



What is lumbar puncture?

Lumbar puncture, also called spinal tap, is a procedure in which the fluid surrounding the spinal cord (called the cerebrospinal fluid or CSF) is withdrawn or a medicine or contrast is injected. The procedure may be performed for any of the following reasons:

- To measure the pressure around the brain and spinal cord
- To relieve pressure in the head
- To give spinal anesthesia
- To inject contrast for an x-ray diagnostic test
- To inject medications
- To examine CSF at a laboratory for any other reason.

How do I prepare for the procedure?

- You will be required to fast for at least 4 hours before the procedure.
- If you are taking any blood thinners such as aspirin, please consult a healthcare provider at radiology. Depending on your case, they may ask you to discontinue your medication for some time before the procedure.
- You may be required to undergo laboratory tests up to a week prior to your procedure. Required blood tests include PT, APTT, INR and platelets count.

What will happen during the procedure?

- You will be asked to lie down, flat on your side or belly, on an x-ray table.
- At the puncture site, your skin will be cleaned with an antiseptic, while the rest of your body will be covered with sterilized sheets.
- A needle will be inserted into your lower back, between the two lumbar vertebrae (bones between the rib cage and pelvis). This may cause some discomfort; however, the needle will not come in contact with the spinal cord during the procedure.
- The spinal canal (cavity enclosing the spinal cord) will be penetrated, and according to medical requirement, either CSF will be withdrawn or medication/contrast will be injected.
- You may feel minor discomfort or a slightly heavy head.
- After the collection of the fluid or injection of medication/contrast, the needle will be removed. The punctured side will be cleaned with an antiseptic and covered with a small bandage.
- You will stay in the lying position on your back or stomach for about an hour.

What will happen after the procedure?

- After the procedure, you will be asked to rest for a few hours, with your head raised using a pillow. This will help reduce the likelihood of a headache.
- You will also be asked to increase your oral fluid intake to reduce the severity of a headache.
- You will be prescribed pain killers, in case you experience headache or pain around the needle insertion site.
- You can resume your normal diet 30 minutes after the procedure.

Will the procedure hurt?

You may feel some discomfort while the needle is being inserted. However, you must remain absolutely still during this process.

Scheduling an appointment

Please call the AKUH Contact Centre at 021-111-911-911 for appointments and information.

Please note the following:

- Bring your doctor's prescription and previous medical/radiology record on the day of procedure.
- Arrive 15 minutes prior to your appointment for registration and other formalities. Late arrival may lead to delays or rescheduling of your examination.
- Patients requiring urgent attention will be given priority. This may result in delay in starting your procedure. Your cooperation in this regard will be requested and appreciated.
- Please inform your physician if you are pregnant, before the procedure, as the procedure may need to be postponed or cancelled.