

Patient Information

CT Lumbar Puncture

What is a Lumbar Puncture?

A lumbar puncture is a procedure in which the fluid, called Cerebrospinal Fluid or CSF, surrounding the spinal cord and spinal nerves is withdrawn through a needle and then examined in the laboratory. Sometimes as part of the procedure the pressure of your CSF is also collected. As the fluid surrounds the brain it contains information about the brain and spine. Post procedure the fluid or CSF is sent to pathology to further investigate your illness.

Preparation

No preparation is required, however we do recommend hydrating in the days leading up to your appointment.

On the day of your procedure you will be admitted to Day Stay under your private health insurance. You will need to present to admissions on Level 1 and our porters will bring you down from the ward on a bed.

The hospital requires you to have someone pick you up and drive you home once you are discharged. Public transport is not acceptable. *Should your circumstances be that you do not have anyone to accompany you, please contact us immediately to discuss.*

How long will it take?

The procedure usually takes about thirty minutes and you will remain in the day surgery area for approximately 2 hours post procedure.

What to expect

The injection will be performed by a radiologist who will be assisted by our radiographers and nursing staff. You will be asked to change into a gown and lie either face down or on your side, on the CT table. A series of planning scans will be taken so that the exact position for the injection site can be marked on your back with a removable marker.

The region over the lower spine will be cleansed with an antiseptic solution and covered with sterile drape. The radiologist will inject the area with a local anaesthetic to numb the skin. A very fine needle is positioned in the fluid filled space below the spinal cord. To do this, the needle has to be passed between the vertebrae in your back. There may be some discomfort involved but usually you will feel more pressure than pain. Occasionally the needle will rub against a nerve and you may feel a tingling down your leg. When the needle is in the correct position, the radiologist will collect the fluid and test the pressure of your CSF. Once the procedure is finished the needle is removed and a bandaid placed on the area.

After Your Examination

A porter will return you to the NSPH Day Ward where they will observe you for 2-4 hours, after which you will be free to leave.

The CSF fluid collected will be sent to pathology who will analyse the fluid and send the result to your referring doctor. You may receive an account from them for the pathology analysis of your CSF.

For your comfort it is recommended you:

- Take it easy for the next forty-eight (48) hours.
- No heavy lifting for forty-eight (48) hours.
- Resume your normal activities gradually.

Patient Information

CT Lumbar Puncture

Possible Side-Effects and Complications

In general, this is a very safe procedure, but there are some potential complications that may occur.

The main ones include:

- Back pain
- Headache which is worse when you stand up.
- Infection, including meningitis.
- Local bleeding.

If you develop a headache which is worse when you stand up, this could be related to continued loss of CSF at the needle site. It is best to lie down, ideally on your stomach to decrease the pressure and get up as little as possible.

If pain and/or headache continues, either phone your doctor or phone the North Shore Radiology and Nuclear Medicine nurses on (02) 9170 4500. In some cases this may require an injection to decrease the headache.

Questions?

You will be given the opportunity to ask any questions of the technicians or radiologist at the time of your procedure, however if you have any queries prior to the appointment, please feel free to contact us by phone or email – 02 9170 4500 or contact@nsrnm.com.au

If you have any questions regarding **why** the lumbar puncture is required, these should be directed to your specialist or the doctor looking after you. We are happy to reschedule your booking so you can discuss it with your doctor.

