

Lumbar Puncture (Spinal Tap)

What is a Lumbar Puncture?

Fluoroscopy is a special form of X-ray that produces real-time video images, as opposed to pictures on film, making it possible to see internal organs and joints in motion. A lumbar puncture (also called a spinal tap) is a fluoroscopic procedure used to collect and look at the cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) surrounding the brain and spinal cord.

Why is my doctor requesting a Lumbar Puncture?

To help diagnose symptoms caused by infection (meningitis), cancer, or subarachnoid hemorrhage. It can also aid in diagnosing diseases of the brain such as multiple sclerosis or Guillian-Barre Syndrome. They will also measure the CSF pressure in the space surrounding the spinal cord.

How do I prepare for the lumbar puncture?

There is no special preparation required before the test. The technologist and radiologist should be informed if the patient is on blood thinners or other medications.

What Happens During the Test?

Prepare for at least 45 minutes for the procedure. The technologist will obtain a medical history. The patient will be positioned face-down on the exam table. The radiologist will mark on the patient's back with a pen where the puncture will occur. The area is cleansed with antiseptic soap and draped with sterile towels. A local anesthetic is put into the skin. A long thin needle is put in the spinal canal. When the needle is in place, the solid central core of the needle is removed. At this time, CSF is collected. After the Exam The patient will be asked to lie flat in bed with the head slightly raised for at least 30 minutes (or longer depending on the facility preference). The patient may be asked to drink extra fluids after the procedure to prevent headache.

How will I know the Results?

A radiologist will analyze the images and send a signed report to the referring physician within one business day. Your providers office will contact you to schedule an appointment to discuss the results.