



**West Hertfordshire
Hospitals**
NHS Trust

How to contact us

Neurology Department
Watford General Hospital
West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust
Vicarage Road
Watford
Hertfordshire
WD18 0HB

Tel: 01923 436138 / 217350

Email: westherts.neurology@nhs.net



A guide to...

Lumbar Puncture

Patient Information

If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01923 217 187** or email **westherts.pals@nhs.net**



Appointment Coordinator
01923 436138
01923 217350

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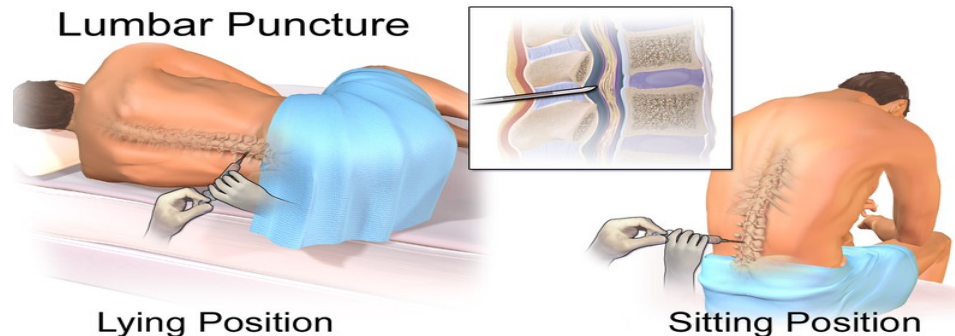


What is a Lumbar Puncture?

- A lumbar puncture is a procedure used to obtain a sample of cerebrospinal fluid and sometimes also to measure its pressure.
- Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) is a clear, colourless bodily fluid that surrounds the brain and spinal cord.
- The procedure involves inserting a thin needle in the lower back to obtain CSF samples to be sent to the laboratory for analysis.
- These samples of CSF can give information about a range of conditions which may affect the nervous system.
- If you are not sure why you are having a lumbar puncture, please feel free to ask the doctor who is performing the procedure.
- You will be asked to consent prior to having the lumbar puncture by the doctor performing it.

How is the procedure performed?

- Normally, a patient lies on their left side with the knees bent and positioned as close to the chest as possible and the head tilted forwards. This is referred to as the “fetal” position. Occasionally, the lumbar puncture is performed with the patient sitting up.
- After positioning the patient, the doctor will then determine the place into which he or she will insert the needle. This may take a few minutes and involves feeling the surrounding area.
- The site will then be cleansed with an antiseptic solution. The solution might feel cold at first contact.
- The area will then be numbed with a local anaesthetic, injected just under the skin using a fine needle.
- Once the area is sufficiently numb, the spinal needle will be introduced. You may feel a sensation of pushing and or pressure at this stage.
- You may feel a tingling sensation in your buttock or leg when the needle is pushed forward, which can be slightly uncomfortable. Inform the doctor doing the lumbar puncture of these sensations.
- Once the spinal needle is in place, the CSF will be collected slowly, which can take about ten minutes.



What happens after the procedure?

- You will usually be asked to lie flat for 30 minutes and increase your fluid intake.
- Your nurse will check your vital signs and make sure you are comfortable and safe.
- If your vital signs are normal and if you are feeling well, then you will be discharged home.
- You may not feel up to driving straight away so if possible bring someone with you to take you home.

What are the possible side effects of a Lumbar Puncture?

- Post-LP headache occurs in approximately 1/20 people. This usually settles in a couple of days and can be helped by lying down, taking over-the-counter painkillers and increasing fluid and caffeine intake.
- Rarely a post-LP headache can persist. Let your doctor know if it continues for more than a week.
- Mild back ache is quite common and should settle in a few days.
- Bleeding at the puncture site is uncommon. **Please inform the doctor before undergoing the procedure if you have a bleeding disorder or are taking any anticoagulants such as warfarin, rivaroxaban, dagibatran, clopidogrel or aspirin.**
- Infection is very rare as the LP is done using sterile conditions.
- Nerve damage is an extremely rare risk.