

Patient information factsheet

Having an x-ray guided lumbar puncture

We have given you this factsheet to give you information about having an x-ray guided lumbar puncture. We hope it will answer any questions you may have. If you have any further questions, please speak to a member of the team using the details at the end of this factsheet.

What is an x-ray guided lumbar puncture?

An x-ray guided lumbar puncture is a radiological procedure where a needle is passed into the spinal canal. This is usually done in the lower back (lumbar) region.

A lumbar puncture takes approximately 45 to 90 minutes.

Purpose of the lumbar puncture

A lumbar puncture is used to measure the pressure and/or take samples of cerebrospinal fluid (the clear fluid that surrounds the spinal cord and brain). The samples are then looked at in a laboratory.

A lumbar puncture may need to be guided by an x-ray if past attempts at a conventional lumbar puncture have been difficult.

Preparing for your procedure

You should eat and be well hydrated on the day of your procedure.

Medication

Please contact us on **023 8120 6588** if you are currently taking:

- warfarin
- heparin
- antiplatelet medication such as
 - aspirin
 - clopidogrel
 - dipyridamole

The clinical team organising your procedure will let you know if these medications need to be stopped before your x-ray guided lumbar puncture. Please do not stop taking any medication unless you have been advised to do so.

Pregnancy

Please contact us on **023 8120 6588** if:

- you are pregnant
- you think you may be pregnant
- you are trying to get pregnant

Your x-ray guided lumbar puncture may need to be rescheduled.

Arriving for your procedure

When you arrive for your procedure, you will be admitted to the day unit. We will ask you to change into a hospital gown. We may need to take a blood sample to check that your blood is clotting normally. It can take up to two hours to receive the result of this blood sample.

A doctor will ask you about your general medical history. They will also explain the procedure, the risks associated with it, and then ask you to sign a consent form if you are happy to proceed with the x-ray guided lumbar puncture.

You may want to arrange for someone to collect you from hospital and drive you home after your procedure, so that you have someone with you if you feel unwell.

During the procedure

We will ask you to lie on the x-ray table (usually on your left side) with your knees bent up. Your head will rest on a pillow.

The radiologist will look at your spine under an x-ray and will view the images on a monitor screen. This is so the radiologist can find the best location to position the needle for the lumbar puncture.

We will clean the skin on your lower back and then numb the area with local anaesthetic. When the area is numb, a spinal needle will be inserted. Cerebrospinal fluid will begin to drip out of the needle. The pressure of this fluid is measured and a small amount is collected and sent to the laboratory for analysis.

After the procedure

We will take you back to the day unit after your procedure. You will need to stay on the day unit for at least one hour after your procedure so that we can monitor your recovery.

Side effects

Common side effects

Headache

A headache is a common complication of a lumbar puncture. It may begin several hours to several days after the procedure and can last for a few days. You may also have a stiff neck or feel nauseous (sick). The headache is usually mild and usually gets better with flat bed-rest and increased fluids.

In some instances, the headache may be more severe and require medication or other measures for relief (such as an injection to seal the lumbar puncture site). If this occurs you should speak to your GP.

Back pain and bruising

You may experience some back pain and bruising at the lumbar puncture site. This can be treated with painkillers such as paracetamol.

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Other complications

Other complications of a lumbar puncture include:

- infection of the skin or cerebrospinal fluid (this will need treatment with antibiotics)
- a blood clot forming around the lumbar puncture site or your brain (this may need surgery)
- persistent back pain
- leg numbness and tingling
- hearing loss
- double vision
- herniation (compression of the brainstem or the top of the spinal column by brain swelling)

If these occur, please contact your clinical team or go to your nearest emergency department.

Symptoms after the procedure

You may experience some symptoms after your x-ray guided lumbar puncture, such as:

- weakness or numbness in your arms or legs
- new incontinence or constipation
- a severe persistent headache that does not get better when you lay flat
- temperature 38°C or above
- sweating
- confusion

Please speak to your GP or go to your nearest emergency department if you have any of the above symptoms. If you are still in hospital when you have any of the above symptoms, tell your nurse.

Results

The results of any samples taken and pressures recorded will be available at your next outpatient appointment.

Contact us

If you have any further questions before your procedure, please contact our team.

Cross-sectional imaging department

Telephone: **023 8120 6588** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**