

# **Lumbar Puncture or Spinal Tap**



## **What is a Lumbar Puncture?**

A lumbar puncture (also called a spinal tap) is a procedure used to collect and look at the cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) surrounding the brain and spinal cord.

## **CPT Code**

62270 (77003 for fluoroscopic guidance)

## **Indications**

Find a cause for symptoms caused by infection (meningitis), cancer, or subarachnoid hemorrhage. Diagnose diseases of the brain such as multiple sclerosis or Guillian-Barre Syndrome. Measure the CSF pressure in the space surrounding the spinal cord.

## **Contraindications**

Skin infection near the site of the puncture. Acute spinal cord trauma. Suspicion of increased intracranial pressure due to a cerebral mass. Pregnancy.

## **How Does Your Patient Prepare?**

There is no special preparation required before the test. Inform your physician if your patient is on blood thinners or other medications.

## **What Happens During the Test?**

A technologist will obtain a medical history from your patient. Your patient will be asked to lie on his stomach. 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.

When the needle is in the spinal canal, a nanometer is hooked to the needle to measure the pressure of the CSF. The radiologist will take the opening pressure reading and will check the appearance and consistency of the fluid. Samples are collected and sent to an independent lab for study. The entire procedure takes about 30 minutes.

## **After the Exam**

Your patient will be asked to lie flat in bed with their head slightly raised for at least 30 minutes. Your patient may be asked to drink extra fluids after the procedure to prevent headache.

## **The Results**

A radiologist will analyze the images and send a signed report to the referring physician within 1 business day.

(Information adapted from Web MD and Dr. Paul Keller)

*This manual is intended for use as merely a guideline for referring physicians and their staff only. It contains information pertaining to the most commonly ordered exams and indications. However, Iowa Radiology does not recommend any particular examination. Individual radiologist preference or patient circumstances may dictate ordering alternative studies. Although contrast codes are not needed to place an order, the following contrast codes may be used in placing orders: CT Contrast Q9967, MRI contrast A9577 and A9579.*