



PATIENT
EDUCATION



Lumbar Puncture

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AMERICAN UNIVERSITY of BEIRUT MEDICAL CENTER

المركز الطبي في الجامعة الأمريكية في بيروت

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What is a lumbar puncture?

A lumbar puncture is a procedure done to collect a sample of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF, fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord).

Why would I need a lumbar puncture?

Your doctor might recommend doing a lumbar puncture to:

- Diagnose several neurological disorders, infections, cancers, or bleeding in/around the brain or spinal cord
- Remove excess fluid around the brain
- Measure the pressure of the CSF around the brain and spinal cord

How do I prepare for the lumbar puncture?

- On the day of the lumbar puncture, you may be asked to stop eating and drinking before the scheduled procedure time.
- Check with your doctor if you need to stop or adjust the dose of any of your medications before the procedure, especially blood thinners.
- Inform your doctor about any type of allergy you have.
- Make sure to inform the doctor if you are or might be pregnant.
- Do not come to the Medical Center alone. You will need someone to take you home after the lumbar puncture.
- Be at the Medical Center at least 30 minutes before the scheduled procedure time.
- You will be asked to sign a consent form that gives your doctor permission to perform the procedure.

How is a lumbar puncture done?

- You will be asked to take off your top clothes and wear a patient gown.
- Then, you will sit and lean forward or lie down on your side with your knees bent towards your chest.
- The injection site will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution, then the doctor injects a local anesthetic to decrease pain sensation during the procedure.

- The doctor will insert a needle in your lower spine and withdraw a sample of CSF. You may feel pressure in your back during the needle insertion.
- The needle will be removed and the injection site will be covered with a bandage.
- The procedure takes around 30 minutes.
- When the procedure is done, you will lie flat on your back for around one hour.

What happens after the lumbar puncture?

- After the procedure, someone has to drive you home. You should avoid driving for the rest of the day.
- During the first 24 hours after the procedure, you should rest and avoid any strenuous activity.
- You may have a headache or a backache and you may feel pain or soreness at the injection site for two days. In case of discomfort, apply cold packs to the injection site to reduce it. You may take pain killers as prescribed by your doctor to relieve the pain.
- You can receive the official report of the lumbar puncture from the Pathology & Laboratory Medicine Reports (AUBMC main building, first floor) after two working days (unless otherwise indicated by your doctor). Your doctor will discuss the findings of the lumbar puncture with you.

When should I contact my doctor?

Contact your doctor immediately if you have:

- Persistent or increasing pain in your head, back, and legs
- Any sign of infection, such as fever and chills
- Swelling, redness, or bleeding/clear fluid leak at the injection site
- Tingling or numbness below your waist
- Weakness in the legs
- Urinary symptoms such as incontinence, retention, urgency, and frequency
- Nausea or vomiting

For any questions or concerns, please contact the nurse on 01 - 350000, ext. 7551 or 7432. We are available Monday through Friday from 8:00 am till 5:00 pm. We are here to answer all your questions.