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**Capital Health**, Nova Scotia
www.cdha.nshealth.ca

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The information in this brochure is provided for information and education purposes only. The information is not intended to be and does not constitute healthcare or medical advice. If you have any questions, please ask your healthcare provider.

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years.
Lumbar Drain

This pamphlet is about a lumbar drain and why it may be needed. We would like to encourage you to read this pamphlet. The nurses and doctors will also explain the use of this drain. Feel free to ask us any questions about the drain and about any other aspect of care.

How is the drain inserted?
• The drain will be inserted at the bedside or in the Operating Room (OR) by a doctor assisted by a nurse.
• The area around where the drain will be inserted will be cleaned and frozen.
• The drain (small plastic tube) will be inserted in the small of the back using a needle.
• The drain will then be connected to a hard plastic drainage system.
• The area around the drain will be covered with a dressing.
What is a lumbar drain?
Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) cushions the brain and spinal cord. This fluid is made continuously. Usually as the new fluid is made, the old fluid is absorbed. Sometimes CSF may need to be removed with a drain. The lumbar drain is a small plastic catheter used to remove CSF. Removing fluid, may help the suture line (stitches) to heal. It may also improve the blood flow to the spinal cord. The doctor decides if the patient needs a lumbar drain.

What happens while the drain is in place?
• The nurse will be watching the patient closely.
• The nurse will explain about the drain.
• He/she will also be checking the drainage system frequently. The fluid may be clear or coloured.
• While the drain is in place, the patient may be allowed to get up with supervision.
• The nurse must closely monitor the drainage system.
• The head of the bed may be elevated.
• Please do not make any adjustments to the level of the bed.

How is the drain removed?
• The doctor decides when the patient is well enough to have the drain removed.
• After the dressing is taken off, the stitch holding the drain will be removed. This should not cause any discomfort.

What are the risks of a lumbar drain?
The risk of a lumbar drain are:
• meningitis (inflammation and infection of the covering of the brain). Patients are sometimes given antibiotics while the drain is in place.
• bleeding
• paralysis
• hematoma (blood clot that forms under the skin)
• leakage of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF)

We know that this is a stressful time for all of you. This may make it very difficult to remember things. We want to help you understand all aspects of care. If at any time you wish us to review information, do not hesitate to ask.
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- A small bandgage will be placed over the area.
- The area will be checked by the nurse. If the area feels wet, tell the nurse. Sometimes, a small amount of CSF may leak from the site. If this happens, the doctor may ask the patient to stay on bed rest. Sometimes, the doctor will need to insert a stitch.

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