

2015

# After Your Lumbar Puncture



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A needle was placed in your back today to collect cerebrospinal fluid (CSF). This is the fluid that surrounds the brain and spinal cord. During a lumbar puncture, samples of the fluid are taken and sent to the lab for testing. From the results of this test, your doctor may diagnose a particular disease or injury. Some of these tests take several days to weeks until the final results are available.



## Care at home

### Care of the puncture site

The Band-Aid® (adhesive bandage) can be removed from your back 12-24 hours after the procedure is completed.

### Headache

Headache, which happens in 10% to 30% of patients, is the most common complication following lumbar puncture.

- › To help relieve a headache, lie down and drink extra fluids. Drinking beverages with caffeine, such as coffee, tea, and colas, may be especially helpful to relieve headaches. However, do not drink only those beverages.
- › For each beverage you drink with caffeine, drink at least one without caffeine. Do not drink caffeine if a doctor has told you to avoid it.

- › If a spinal headache continues, and it is not relieved by bedrest, fluids, or pain-relieving medications, then you need to call your doctor or go to the Emergency Department.

### **Back discomfort**

- Some people feel back discomfort after a lumbar puncture. To help with back discomfort, apply ice wrapped in a towel for 20 minutes, 3 to 4 times the first day.

### **Bathing**

- On the day of your procedure, you may shower, but do not soak in a bathtub. The day after your procedure, you may bathe in a bathtub or shower. Do not use a hot tub or whirlpool bath for 24 hours after your procedure.

### **Activity**

- Do not do strenuous (hard) activities after the test
- Do not lift anything heavier than 10 pounds
- No bending
- No straining
- Avoid straining with a bowel movement
- No driving for the first 4-6 hours after the procedure

### **Diet:**

- Go back to eating and drinking normally

## Return to the Emergency Department if you have:

- Increased pain, redness, or swelling at the injection site in your back.
- A headache that gets worse, and lying down does not help the pain.
- A fever or temperature higher than 38°C (100°F).

If you have any questions, please ask.  
We are here to help you.

### Looking for more health information?

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.  
For more information go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

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