



# Lumbar Puncture

## Patient information Leaflet

January 2020

## Introduction

This leaflet aims to help you understand the clinical procedure of a lumbar puncture, why it is carried out and what happens during the procedure.

### What is a lumbar puncture?

A lumbar puncture is a medical procedure carried out to obtain a sample of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF). The same fluid covers the brain and the spinal cord. When a lumbar puncture is carried out, a needle is used to obtain CSF from the bottom of the spine; this is the easiest and safest way.

### How is a lumbar puncture done?

A special hollow needle goes through the skin in the lower back, into the lower spine. The CSF comes out through the needle and a few drops are collected and sent to the laboratory. A nurse will hold and comfort your child in a foetal (curled up) position whilst the doctor obtains the sample.



### Is a lumbar puncture dangerous?

The spinal cord cannot be injured by a lumbar puncture that is carried out following the correct procedure, as the needle enters the spine below the lower end of the spinal cord. The body replaces the small amount of fluid that is removed very quickly (in less than 2 days).

### Why does my child need a lumbar puncture?

The exact reasons for your child having a lumbar puncture will be explained by the doctors looking after your child. It is generally carried out for one or more of these reasons:

- To detect possible infection in the CSF
- To measure the pressure in the CSF
- To measure the levels of chemicals in the CSF

The doctor will explain the procedure in detail before it is carried out and discuss any worries you may have, you will be asked to give your consent at this time. Depending on your child's age, he or she may be given a sedative medication to make them

sleepy, an anaesthetic cream may also be applied to his or her back in order to numb the area; this again is dependent on the age of your child. In older children lidocaine injection can be used to numb the area.

### What happens to my child during the lumbar puncture?

This procedure is carried out in the treatment room on the ward. You may stay with your child however it can be very distressing for you as a parent to watch so we do advise against this. Your child will be comforted throughout and brought immediately back to you.

### What happens next?

Your child may have a bruise to the area which will be sore; paracetamol can be given to help with this. Some of the tests are routine and results will be received within a few hours, however some can take longer. As soon as the results return the doctor will review them and discuss them with you and how they will affect the treatment your child is receiving.

### Useful Contact Numbers:

- Contact your GP for advice.
- Children's Unit 0161 922 5252 (24 hrs)
- Children's Community Team 0161 922 5251 (08.00-20.00 mon-sun)
- Go to Doc (GP service) 0161 785 0805 (out of hours)
- NHS Direct 111 (24hr helpline)

### Useful Websites/information:

- Department of Health ([www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk))
- NHS Choices ([www.nhs.uk/conditions](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions))
- NHS institute for innovation and improvement ([www.institute.nhs.uk](http://www.institute.nhs.uk))
- NHS Improvement ([www.improvement.nhs.uk](http://www.improvement.nhs.uk))

If you have any questions you want to ask, you can use this space below to remind you

If you have a visual impairment this leaflet can be made available in bigger print or on audiotape. If you require either of these options please contact the Patient Information Centre on 0161 922 5332

If you require an interpreter, please ask an appropriate person to contact our central booking office between Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm on 0161 922 6991 to arrange this for you.

**語言翻譯及病者支持服務 (LIPS):**

如果閣下需要翻譯員在您的預約當日幫助您的話 請找一名合適的家庭成員 **0161 922 6991** 聯絡本中央預約辦事處來您您安排 我們的辦公時間是星期一至星期五 上午 8 時至下午 5 時

**Językowo Tłumaczeniowa Usługa Pomocy dla Pacjenta (Language, Interpretation and Patient Support Service LIPS):**

Jeśli potrzebujesz pomocy tłumacza w trakcie swojej wizyty, proszę poprosić odpowiedniego członka rodziny o skontaktowanie się z Centralnym Biurem Zamówień (Central Booking Office), w celu zorganizowania tłumacza pomiędzy poniedziałkiem a piątkiem w godzinach od 08:00 - 17:00 pod numerem **0161 922 6991**.

لینگوئج، انٹرپریٹیشن اینڈ پیٹینٹ سپورٹ سروس (لپس) (Lips)

اگر آپ کو اپنی اپائنٹمنٹ کے لئے مترجم کی مدد کی ضرورت ہو تو براہ مہربانی اپنے خاندان کے کسی موزوں فرد سے کہیں کہ وہ ہمارے سنٹرل بکنگ آفس سے پیر سے جمعہ 8.00 بجے صبح سے 5.00 بجے شام کے دوران 0161 922 6991 پر فون کر کے اس کا بندوبست کریں۔

**References:**

Adapted from Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Trust: Information for Families

GOSH NHS Trust November 2014

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