NHS
University Hospitals Sussex
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After your lumbar puncture

Neurology

Patient information

Why have I been given this information?

You have been given this information because you are going to have a lumbar puncture, which is a needle in your lower back.

This information tells you what to do after the procedure, including how to look after yourself once you get home and how to cope with any side effects. It also tells you what side effects to look out for that may mean you need medical help.

What is a lumbar puncture?

A lumbar puncture is when a doctor or nurse inserts a small needle into your lower back to collect a small amount of fluid, called cerebrospinal fluid or CSF, for testing. It is a safe and common procedure.

You will be given a local anaesthetic to make the area numb first.

What can I do after the procedure?

You may get up straight after the procedure. You can eat and drink normally unless you are told not to.

Are there any possible side effects?

- **Headache.** This is usually mild and happens when sitting or standing. It will improve if you lie down.
- **Back discomfort.** A dull ache at the puncture site.

These effects usually settle within a day or two.

What should I do to look after myself?

- **Rest:** Take it easy for 24 hours. Avoid hard physical activities, heavy lifting or exercise.
- **Hydrate:** Drink plenty of fluid, especially water, tea or coffee or drinks that contain caffeine. Caffeine may help if you develop a mild headache.
- **Pain relief:** Paracetamol can help with discomfort. Avoid aspirin or ibuprofen unless approved by your doctor.
- **Keep the area clean:** you do not need to clean the site, but avoid getting it dirty. You may remove the small dressing on your back after 24 hours.

When to seek medical advice

If you have:

- Severe or persistent headache that does not improve when lying flat.
- Fever, neck stiffness, or rash.
- Numbness, weakness or pain in your legs.
- Any new worrying symptoms.

Contact the Neurology ward where the procedure was performed for advice. The ward is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Telephone **01273 696955 Ext. 63271.**

Or contact your doctor, local emergency department or **NHS 111.**

When will I get the results of the lumbar puncture?

Your doctor will discuss your test results with you once they are available. Some results may take 2-4 weeks. If you have any concerns before then, contact your GP.

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