



CARE INSTRUCTIONS

KAISER PERMANENTE

Lumbar Puncture: What to Expect at Home

Your Recovery

A lumbar puncture (also called a spinal tap) is a test to check the fluid that surrounds and protects your spinal cord and brain. Your doctor may have done this test to look for an infection. In some cases, a lumbar puncture is done to release pressure from too much fluid or to look for diseases such as multiple sclerosis.

You may feel tired, and your back may be sore where the needle went in (the puncture site). You may have a mild headache for a day or two. This can happen when some of the spinal fluid is removed. Some people also have trouble sleeping for a day or two.

The fluid taken during a lumbar puncture is often sent to a lab for tests. Your doctor or nurse will call you with the test results.

This care sheet gives you a general idea about how long it will take for you to recover. But each person recovers at a different pace. Follow the steps below to get better as quickly as possible.

How can you care for yourself at home?

Activity

- Your doctor may tell you to lie flat in bed for 1 to 4 hours after the procedure. This may prevent a headache.
- Rest when you feel tired. Getting enough sleep will help you recover.
- Ask your doctor when you can drive again.

Diet

Lumbar Puncture: What to Expect at Home (page 2)

- Drink extra fluids after the procedure to help prevent a headache or make it less severe.

Medicines

- If you have pain, take pain medicines exactly as directed.
 - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
 - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.
 - Do not take two or more pain medicines at the same time unless the doctor told you to. Many pain medicines have acetaminophen, which is Tylenol. Too much acetaminophen (Tylenol) can be harmful.
- If you think your pain medicine is making you sick to your stomach:
 - Take your medicine after meals (unless your doctor has told you not to).
 - Ask your doctor for a different pain medicine.
- If your doctor prescribed antibiotics, take them as directed. Do not stop taking them just because you feel better. You need to take the full course of antibiotics.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

When should you call for help?

Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You pass out (lose consciousness).

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have a new or higher fever and a stiff neck.
- You have a severe headache.
- You have any drainage or bleeding from the puncture site.
- You feel numb or lose strength below the puncture site.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

Lumbar Puncture: What to Expect at Home (page 3)

- You still have a headache or sore back 2 days after your procedure.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://www.kp.org>

Enter P586 in the search box to learn more about **"Lumbar Puncture: What to Expect at Home"**.

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