

Name of Child: _____ Date: _____

Spinal Tap or Lumbar Puncture

Why do a spinal tap?

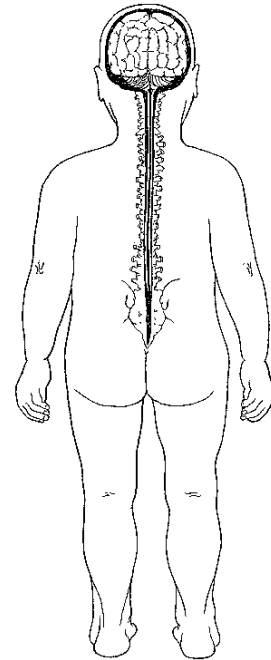
Around the spinal cord and the brain is a cushion of fluid, called **cerebrospinal fluid** or **CSF**. The amount, color and contents of CSF can show details about the body, such as:

- infection, like meningitis
- damage to the brain or spinal cord
- other diseases, like leukemia or lymphoma.

Samples of CSF are taken from the body by a spinal tap or lumbar puncture (LP).

Getting ready:

- The test is scheduled for (time) _____ A.M./P.M.
on (date) _____.
 - We need a consent signed by the parent or guardian to do this test.
 - If your child is old enough to understand, explain to your child what will happen. Do this when you think the time is right. Children do best when they are told what they will see, feel and hear during the test. If you want a Child Life Specialist to help get your child ready for this test, ask your nurse or doctor.
- yes no Cream that numbs the skin will be given to you. Put it on the skin where the spine will be tapped two hours before the test. Your nurse or doctor will show you where.

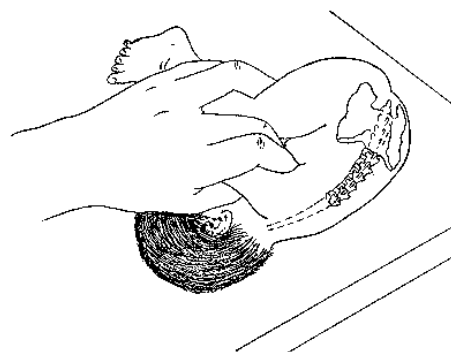


Where the CSF flows

- If your child will be given medicine to be relaxed for the test:
 - yes no Your child should have nothing to eat or drink for _____ hours before the test.
 - yes no Your child will get an IV.
 - yes no Your child has a venous catheter line and does not need an IV.
 - yes no The medicine that will relax your child for the test will be put in by IV. This medicine may make your child dizzy and make your child forget what happened during the test.
 - yes no The doctor may give your child a shot of some medicine that numbs the skin. Your child may feel a quick sting.

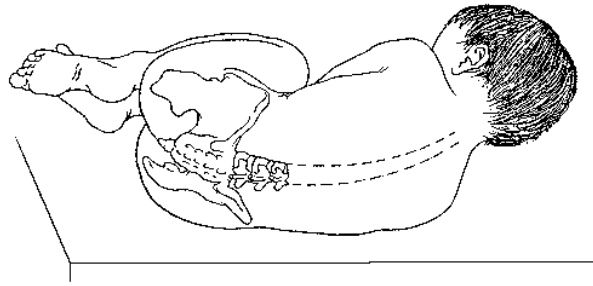
During the test:

- Spinal taps are done in the procedure room, or, if your child is in the Intensive Care Unit, in the hospital room.
- The spinal tap takes between five and fifteen minutes.
- You may stay in the room during the test, or step outside until the test is done.
 - yes no A counselor may be in the room to help you and your child to stay relaxed.
- The nurse, nurse practitioner or doctor will speak softly to your child during the test.
 - yes no If your child is given medicine to be relaxed for the test, a monitor will help the nurse or doctor watch your child's heart rate and breathing.
- A nurse will help hold your child in position for the test. Your child may be placed on his or her side, with knees up and back rounded. Sometimes a child sits up and leans forward, rounding the back.



Your child may be placed on his or her side, with knees up and back rounded.

- The spinal fluid is tapped low in the back, below where the spinal cord ends.
- The nurse or doctor cleans the site with alcohol, and may inject a medicine that numbs the area.
- The nurse or doctor cleans the site with a soap that kills germs (antimicrobial).



Your child may be placed on his or her side, with knees up and back rounded.

- The doctor or nurse practitioner then finds the space between two of the back bones (vertebrae). He or she puts a needle through the skin into the space where there is CSF.
 - You know how a gauge can measure air pressure in a tire? The nurse practitioner or doctor may use a gauge called a manometer to measure the pressure of the CSF.
 - A small amount of CSF flows out the needle into a few test tubes.
- yes no Medicine may be put into the CSF through the needle.
- Once the spinal tap is done, the needle is taken out.

After the test:

- When the needle is taken out, a sterile bandage is put on the site.
 - If necessary, a nurse or doctor may press on the bandage, to lower the chance of bleeding or bruising.
 - Whenever skin is broken with a needle, there is a small chance of infection. Keep the site clean and dry.
- yes no Your child should not bathe or shower until 24 hours after the test.

- Most of the time children are comfortable after the test. Infants go back to their normal behaviors.
 - Most children feel best if they relax the rest of the day, reading or watching TV.
 - Sometimes the child may complain of a headache or backache for one or two days after spinal taps. Teenagers tend to get headaches after spinal taps more often than children or infants. Someone who lies flat for a few hours after the test is less likely to get a headache. If a headache starts, lie down flat.
- Ask your nurse or doctor what medicine to give your child if he or she does have pain. (Check when done.)
- yes no Relaxing medicine can make your child dizzy. Your nurse will tell you how to keep your child safe after the relaxing medicine.

Now that you have read this:

- Tell your nurse or doctor why your child is going to have a spinal tap or lumbar puncture. (Check when done.)



- If you have any questions or concerns,
- call your child's doctor or call _____

If you want to know more about child health and illness,
 visit our library at The Emily Center at Phoenix Children's Hospital:
 1919 East Thomas Road in Phoenix
 602-546-1400
www.phoenixchildrens.com

Disclaimer

The information provided at this site is intended to be general information, and is provided for educational purposes only. It is not intended to take the place of examination, treatment, or consultation with a physician. Phoenix Children's Hospital urges you to contact your physician with any questions you may have about a medical condition.

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