



York Teaching Hospital  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Lumbar Puncture

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact:

**Medical Elective Services (MES)**

The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE

Tel: (01904) 725735 or 721062

[MESpatientenquiries@york.nhs.uk](mailto:MESpatientenquiries@york.nhs.uk)

Caring with pride

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## **What is a lumbar puncture?**

A lumbar puncture is a procedure to drain a small amount of cerebrospinal fluid from your spinal canal using a needle inserted into your lower back between two bones (vertebrae). It is performed by a doctor to diagnose medical conditions associated with the spinal cord and brain.

## **Before your procedure**

Please ensure that you bring a full up to date list of your medications to your lumbar puncture. If we cannot check your medications it may not be possible to undertake the procedure.

Please contact your doctor or staff on the unit if you are on any medication which you think may affect your blood's ability to clot (for example: clopidogrel, warfarin, apixaban, dabigatran, rivaroxaban). If in doubt, please ask; this is not a list of all the possible medications.

## **What can I expect when I come for my lumbar puncture?**

When you arrive at Medical Elective Services (MES), please inform a member of staff in the nurses' office.

A member of staff will then go through some paperwork with you, and will check some measurements (including your temperature, pulse and blood pressure). The doctor will go through the procedure with you, explaining potential complications and ask you to sign a consent form.

Inform the doctor if you have ever had problems with easy bruising or bleeding or are on medications which may cause this.

## **What happens during the procedure?**

You will be asked to lie on your side with your knees to your chest. Less commonly, you will sit up leaning forward. The doctor will only need you to expose your back to perform the procedure.

Some local anaesthetic will be inserted into your back. Before a needle is inserted into your spinal canal, the pressure of the fluid will be measured and samples taken. You should not be able to feel pain but may feel pressure, sometimes the procedure is uncomfortable. Once the samples are taken the needle will be removed and a plaster will be applied.

The lumbar puncture normally takes around 30 to 45 minutes.

You may need to lie flat for a time after the lumbar puncture.

The nurse will check your blood pressure again before you go home and will take any necessary blood samples. You'll be able to go home on the same day – but we recommend that you do not drive yourself home.

## **Are there any potential problems or side effects from this procedure?**

A lumbar puncture is generally a safe procedure and serious side effects such as nerve damage due to bleeding or infection are rare (less than one in ten thousand).

The most common side effects are:

- Headache, which can last for up to a week. This should be treated with standard, over the counter painkillers, such as Paracetamol.
- Swelling, bruising and lower back pain where the needle was inserted. This should get better on its own over a few days.

## **Tell us what you think of this leaflet**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:  
MES, The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York,  
YO31 8HE, telephone 01904 721062 or email  
MESpatientenquiries@york.nhs.uk.

## **Teaching, training and research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email  
pals@york.nhs.uk.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Please telephone or email if you  
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