

Image guided lumbar puncture: aftercare

You have had an image-guided lumbar puncture where we took some fluid samples, which will help us find out what is wrong.

This was performed by Dr _____

Date and time: _____

What to expect afterwards:

- You will be asked to lie flat for around 30 minutes after the procedure.
- You may notice some bruising and minor swelling in your lower back. The swelling is caused by a small amount of fluid leaking and collecting under your skin. This is normally nothing to worry about and the swelling should go down naturally within 48 hours.
- Lumbar punctures are generally very low-risk procedures. However, they can sometimes cause side effects that last a short while:
- A headache is a common side effect of a lumbar puncture, usually developing within 24-48 hours after the procedure. Most people describe a dull or throbbing pain at the front of their head, sometimes spreading to the neck and shoulders. The pain is usually worse while standing or sitting up and is usually relieved by lying down. The headache can usually be treated with simple painkillers, such as paracetamol. Some people have also reported that drinks containing caffeine, such as coffee, tea or cola have helped to reduce the discomfort.
- Some people experience some lower back pain after a lumbar puncture. This is usually felt in and around the area where the needle was inserted, but it can also be felt in the backs of your legs. In most cases, the pain will ease after a few days and it can be treated with painkillers, such as paracetamol.
- There is a small risk of a lumbar puncture leading to bleeding inside the head, although this is very rare. In most cases, the benefits of the lumbar puncture far outweigh its risks. The likelihood of a lumbar puncture causing an infection in the spine is also very small.
- Rarer side effects include tingling and numbness in your legs, hearing loss and double vision.

When to seek help

Please contact us:

- If you develop a headache that is particularly severe or which is accompanied by sickness and vomiting.
- If you develop swelling at the lumbar puncture site, which continues or gets worse.
- If you develop a temperature or sensitivity to bright lights.
- If the lumbar puncture site becomes painful and swollen, or if you notice blood or clear fluid around the site

Please bring this information sheet with you if you seek medical attention.

How long should I keep the plaster on for?

This can be removed when you get home.

When can I resume my normal lifestyle?

You should be able to resume most normal activities of daily living within 24 hours.

When can I drive?

You have been given local anaesthetic only and you may drive later in the day.

What happens next?

The results of your test will go to your referring doctor (usually between 7-10 days). They should contact you or arrange a follow-up appointment to see you in clinic.

Contact us

Radiology Day Case Unit on 0118 322 8368 (Monday-Friday 8.30am-5pm).

Out of hours, please attend Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust Emergency Department or your nearest Emergency Department (A&E).

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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Next review due: September 2025