

Lumbar Drain

General Information

A lumbar drain is a device that collects cerebral spinal fluid from your spinal cord or brain.

A small, flexible tube (catheter) is placed in your lower back (lumbar area) and connected to a drainage system. The drain will collect spinal fluid.

The procedure will be done in the Radiology Department, operating room or in your hospital room.

Before the Procedure

- Your health care provider will talk with you about the procedure, benefits and risks.
- Follow any directions you received from your health care team.
- Tell your health care provider if you:
 - have any allergies to medicine or latex
 - are pregnant
 - take a blood thinner, such as warfarin (Jantoven®)
 - have diabetes.

During the Procedure

- You will wear a hospital gown.
- You may be given a medicine (sedative) to help you relax.
- The nurse will help you lie on your side on the exam table.
- The health care provider will clean your lower back to remove germs.
- It is important that you do not move during the procedure.
- The health care provider will insert a small needle into your lower back and give you a numbing medicine. This may sting.
- The health care provider will remove that needle and place a different needle. You won't feel pain, but you may feel pressure.
- The health care provider will insert the lumbar drain tube and remove the needle.
- The drain will stay in place by a stitch placed by the health care provider. Your nurse will tape the catheter to your skin with special tape.
- Either the nurse in the operating room or Radiology Department, or the nurse on the nursing unit will hook up the catheter to the drainage system.

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After the Procedure

- After the drain is placed, you will return to your room on the nursing unit.
- **Call your nurse before you change your position in bed or raise the head of your bed.** They will help you and adjust the drain.
- The nurse will check the drain often (every 1 to 2 hours) and may adjust the drain to make sure the spinal fluid is draining properly.
- The nurse will ask you questions and ask you to move your arms and legs.
- Your health care provider will tell your health care team when you can get out of bed and how often.
- **Important:** Only the nurse can help you move in bed, adjust the bed or touch the drain. Do not let anyone else (including family members or friends) help with these activities.
- You may take an antibiotic to prevent an infection.

Removing the Drainage System

- The health care provider may clamp the drainage system before removing it.
- Your health care team will ask you if you have a headache, upset stomach or if you feel dizzy.
- Your health care team will watch for leaking spinal fluid as the drain comes out.
- After the health care provider removes the drain, they may place a few stitches at the insertion site.
- The nurse will put a dressing over the insertion site.
- You will need to lie flat on your back or side to help prevent a headache. Your health care provider will determine how long you will need to lie flat.

When to Call Your Nurse

Call your nurse if you have any of these:

- any part of the drainage system becomes disconnected or begins leaking
- headache
- stiff neck
- feeling irritated
- being confused or feeling dizzy
- upset stomach or vomiting
- pain, numbness or tingling in your leg
- leaking fluid
- sensitivity to light.

Follow-up Appointment

Be sure to keep any follow-up appointment with your health care provider or specialist, even if you are feeling well.