

Lumbar Puncture

What is a lumbar puncture?

A **lumbar puncture** (spinal tap) is a procedure used to collect a small amount of spinal fluid. Spinal fluid is a clear liquid that surrounds the brain and spinal cord.

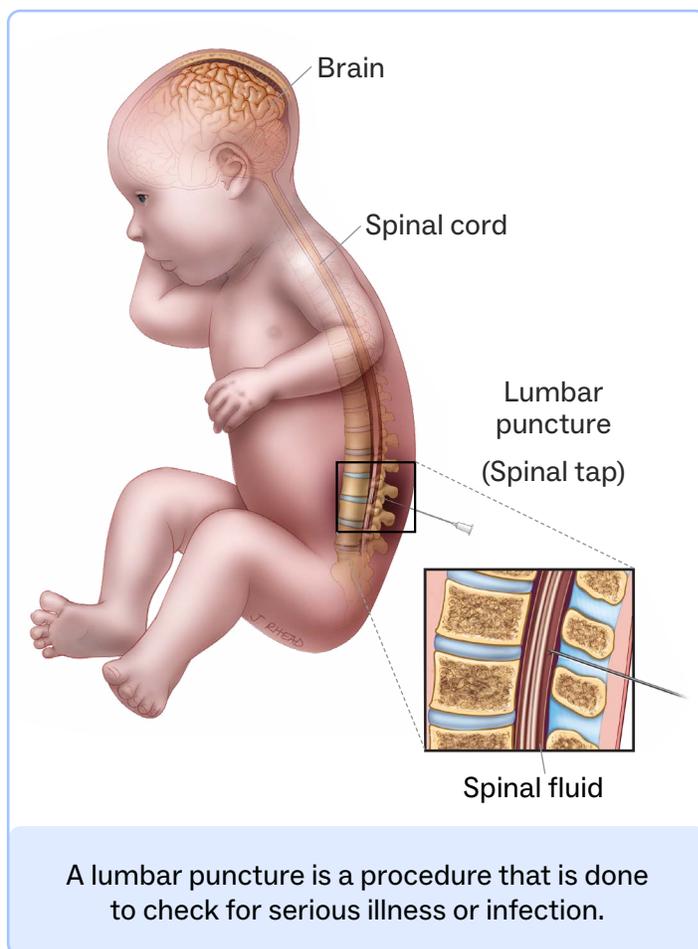
Why does my baby need a lumbar puncture?

A **lumbar puncture is usually done to check for serious illness or infection.** By testing the sample of spinal fluid, your baby's provider can determine whether your baby has meningitis or another illness. They can also check for bleeding around the brain and spine.

A lumbar puncture may be done to remove fluid and relieve pressure when there is too much spinal fluid.

How is a lumbar puncture done?

- **Before.** The provider first cleans the skin where the needle will go in and may use a numbing medicine in a cream or injection (shot).
- **During.** To get the sample of spinal fluid, your baby's provider will put a small, hollow needle into the lower part of your baby's back while a nurse or other care provider holds your baby in a curled-up position. The provider will then insert the hollow needle into the spinal canal and remove a small amount of fluid. Finally, the provider will remove the needle and clean and bandage the area where the needle was inserted. The whole process can take up to an hour.
- **After.** The collected spinal fluid will be sent to a lab to be tested. Your provider will share the results with you as soon as possible.



What does a lumbar puncture feel like?

A lumbar puncture may be uncomfortable. Your baby may feel a cold or wet sensation while their back is cleaned. If numbing medicine is given with a shot, it will sting when it first goes in. Also, when the hollow needle goes in, your baby may feel pressure and perhaps a few seconds of pain. To help comfort your baby during the procedure, the care team may provide a pacifier or some other comfort measure.

