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SPINAL TAP OR LUMBAR PUNCTURE

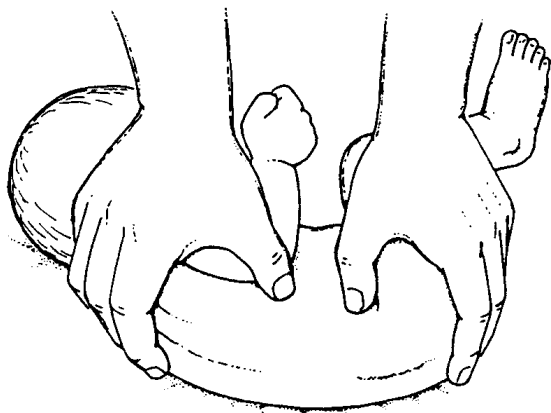
A spinal tap/lumbar puncture (LP) is done to:

- measure the amount of pressure in the spinal canal
- to remove a small amount of cerebral spinal fluid (CSF) for tests
- to give medicine into the spinal fluid
- to remove excess CSF in babies with hydrocephalus (fluid on the brain)

CSF is the fluid that bathes your child's brain and spinal cord. A special needle will be placed in your child's back and then taken out when the spinal tap is done.

GETTING READY FOR THE SPINAL TAP:

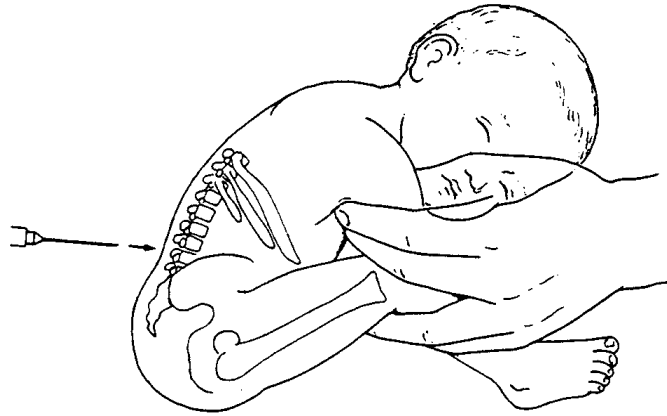
Your child will be placed on his/her side or in a sitting position on a table or stretcher and will have to "curl up in a tight ball". A person will help your child to stay in this position and will explain what the doctor is doing. Holding still is very important and will make the test go more smoothly. The doctor will feel your child's back for a space between the bones of the lower part of the spine to insert the needle. The doctor will clean your child's back with sponges and a special germ-killing soap.



Curling up for a Lumbar Puncture (LP)

DURING THE SPINAL TAP

The doctor may give your child a shot at the site where the special needle will be placed. This shot stings for a few seconds but it will make the spinal tap less painful for your child. Next, the doctor will put the special needle into the space where the CSF is found. Your child will feel some pressure while the needle is being pushed in. The CSF will begin to drip out of the needle and a small amount collected in test tubes. Remember, someone will help your child to stay in position and to stay still.



Having the Lumbar Puncture (LP)

If the doctor needs to put medicine in, it will be given through the same needle after the CSF is collected. When the test is done, the needle will be removed and a band-aid will be placed over the site. The test tubes will be taken to the lab.

Sometimes the spinal tap is done while your child is asleep using special medicine called anesthesia. If anesthesia is used, your child will not be allowed any food or drink from the night before the test until after it is done. Your child may remain sleepy for a short time after the test is done. Usually, when anesthesia is used, the child is not aware of the test and will not remember it later.

AFTER THE SPINAL TAP

Lying flat in bed for ½ hour to one hour may help to prevent a headache. Reading and playing quietly will help your child stay in bed. The doctor will explain the lab report to you and let you know what the plan of treatment will be. Some of the studies can be done in one day, but others will take two or three days. Your child's doctors and nurses will be available to answer your questions. Do not be afraid to ask.