

Lumbar Drain

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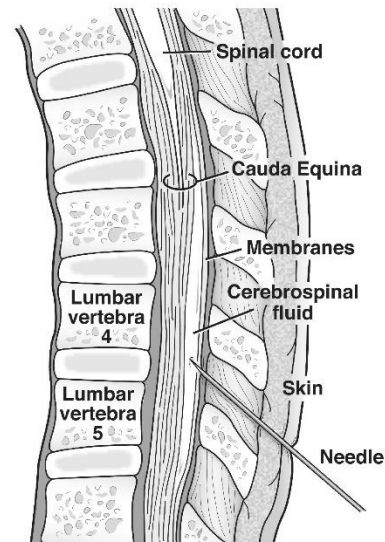
A lumbar drain is a small, flexible, soft plastic tube placed in the lower back to remove cerebral spinal fluid (CSF). The tube is attached to a drainage bag. CSF is a clear fluid that surrounds and protects the brain and spinal cord. A lumbar drain is often needed to collect CSF from the spine after surgery or to reduce pressure in the spinal cord or brain. Too much pressure in the spinal cord can slow blood flow to the area and can lead to confusion and trouble thinking, pain, weakness, and even paralysis.

How the Drain is Placed

Your doctor will place the lumbar drain during surgery in the operating room, in a special procedure room or while you are lying in bed in your hospital room. You will be given medicine to keep you comfortable. You will either lie on your side in bed with your chin tucked to your chest or sit at the edge of the bed leaning over a bedside table.

The doctor will prepare the lumbar area in your lower back where the drain will be placed. They will remove any hair, clean the area to remove any germs and drape a cloth to keep the area sterile.

The doctor will then numb the area and insert a needle between two lower back vertebrae. When the needle is in the right spot, the soft tube will be left in place while the needle is removed. The doctor will place a dressing over the insertion site, tape the tube in place and attach the tube to the drainage system. The drainage system will be attached to an IV pole at your bedside.



What to Expect After Placement

After placement of the drain, the nurse will watch you closely and check your drain and dressing often. The nurse will drain off CSF as ordered by the doctor and adjust the position of the drain. The fluid that is drained may be clear or colored. The nurse will also perform a neurological exam by asking you a series of questions and having you follow commands such as moving your arms and legs or sticking out your tongue. This exam may need to be done as often as every hour.

Do not touch the lumbar drain while it is in place to prevent infection and to keep the drain from coming out.

If you would like to change positions or get out of bed, always ask your nurse for help. The drain must be clamped before moving, and its level may need to be altered after you have moved. Family and friends should never move you, the bed or touch your drain.

How the Drain is Removed

Your doctor will decide when your lumbar drain can safely be removed. At this time, the dressing will be taken off and the tube will be removed. A stitch may be placed at the drain site. When the drain is taken out, it should not cause any discomfort. A dressing will be placed over the site. Your nurse will check it for drainage and infection.

Risks

- Infection
- Nerve irritation
- Paralysis
- Bleeding
- Leakage of CSF
- Air entering the brain space

When to Call

Any time you have questions or concerns, contact your nurse.

Call if you are:

- Drowsy
- Tired
- Confused
- Tense
- Sensitive to light
- Have a stiff neck
- Increased headache
- Leg pain
- Nausea or vomiting
- Numbness or tingling
- Trouble going to the bathroom
- Leaking of fluid from the drain site.