Post Lumbar Puncture

You have had a lumbar puncture. This is also called a spinal tap. This test is done by inserting a needle between the bones of the low back. A small amount of the fluid that surrounds the spinal cord is then removed. This fluid is tested for signs of infection or bleeding. This procedure will usually cause some soreness around the puncture site for a day or two. Occasionally there is a headache for 1-3 days after a lumbar puncture. These are made worse by standing and may be associated with dizziness, nausea or vomiting.

These symptoms are best relieved by lying flat for several days and drinking extra fluids. Caffeinated beverages (black tea, coffee, or colas) every 6 hours can help reduce the pain. Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver. If the headache is very severe or your symptoms are not better after 1-2 days of treatment, contact your caregiver. An injection called an epidural blood patch can be used to stop the spinal fluid from further leaking and improve the headache.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF YOU DEVELOP:

- Fever, chills, or neck stiffness.
- Severe headache, dizziness, passing out, or a seizure.
- Unusual swelling, pain, or redness at the puncture site.
- Rash.
- Stiff neck with or without a stiff back.
- Weakness, numbness or tingling in your legs.

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