

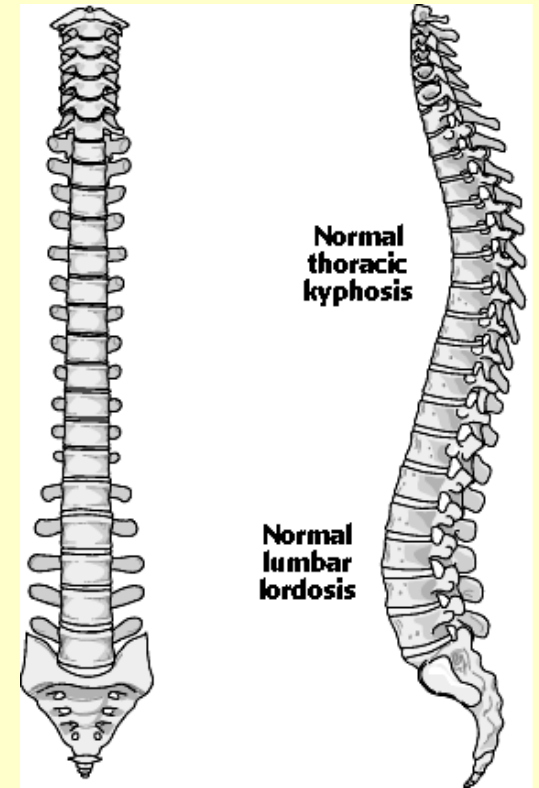
# What is a Lumbar Puncture? (or another name for it is Spinal Tap)

**Let's find out!**

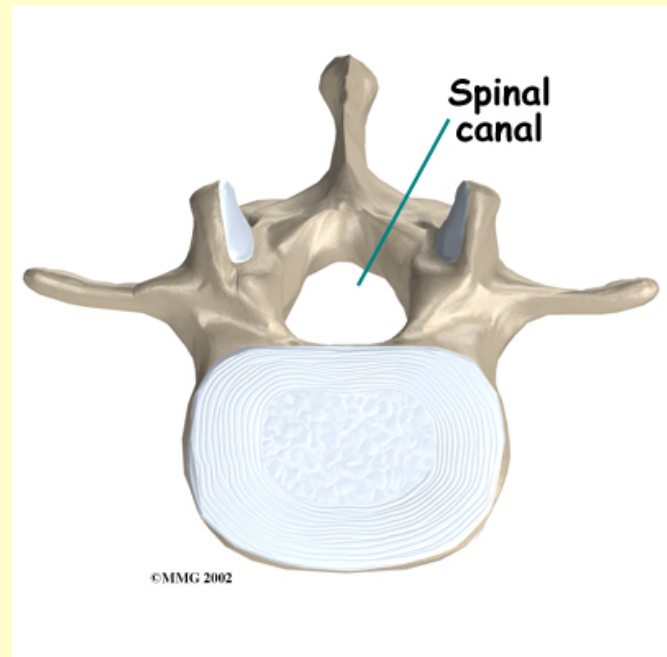
**Scroll down to learn more about your lumbar puncture!**

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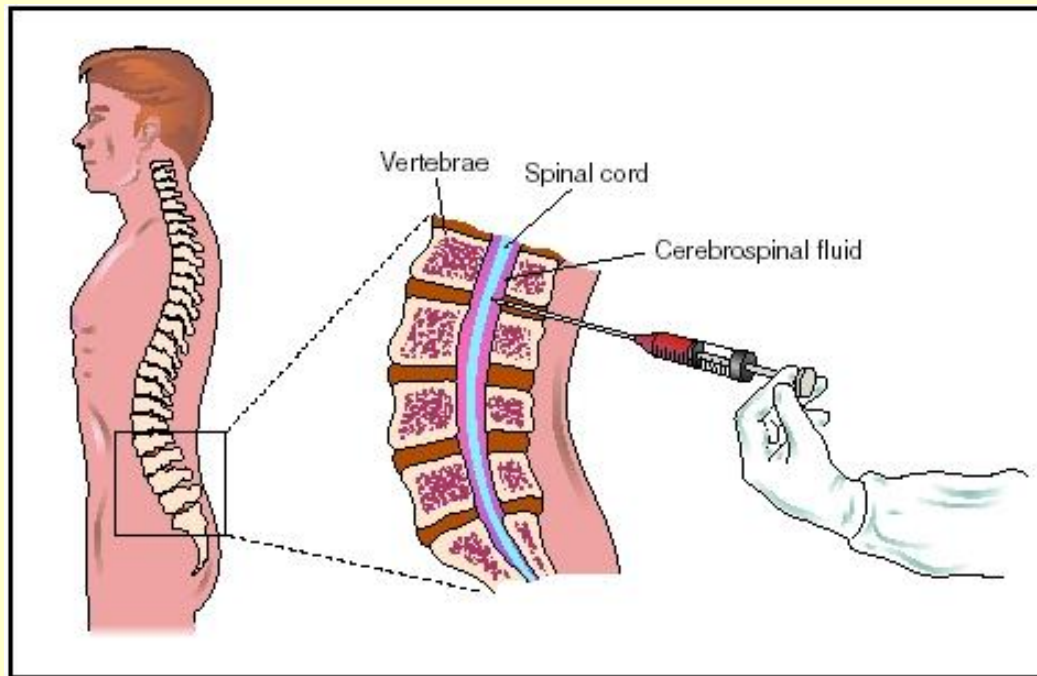
Can you find where your spine is? You're right! It starts up in your neck and goes all the way down your back. You have small bones around your spinal cord that cover it for protection. Your spinal cord helps your brain send messages to your body to help it work and move. Take a look at the picture and see if you can count all the small bones covering your spinal cord.



Even though those small bones help protect your spinal cord they can not touch your spinal cord or the bones could hurt your cord instead of protect it. The space between your spinal cord and small bones is called your Spinal Canal. You have special fluid in this spinal canal that also helps protect your spinal cord. This fluid is called cerebral spinal fluid (CSF). Here is a picture of what your spine and spinal canal look like.

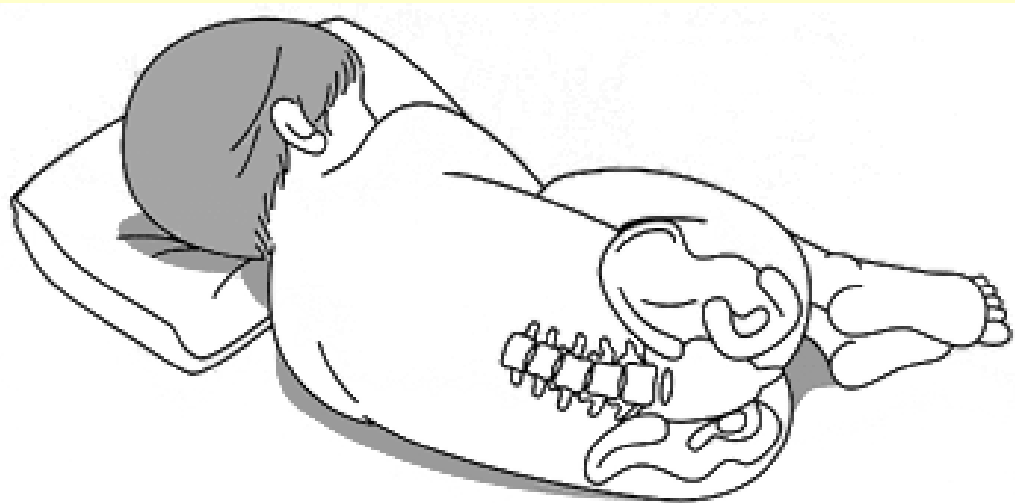


Sometimes doctors need to take some of this fluid out of your spinal canal to see how your body is working. In order to do this, they need to put a special needle into your back to take the fluid out.



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The needle will not be able to find the right spot if your back is straight. So you will have to lay on your side and curl up into a ball. This lets your tiny bones spread apart and allows the needle into your spinal column to remove some fluid. Some children like to pretend they are getting ready to do a cannon ball!



***Lumbar puncture***

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A nurse may also put some special lotion on your back to numb the area so that your skin does not feel the poke of the needle.



The doctor may give you some medicine to help you sleep or relax while they take the fluid from your spine. To get the medicine the nurse may need to start an IV (unless you have a central line already.) Before the doctor gives you your special medicine, make sure to ask if you can pick out a band aid. The doctor will put the band aid on your back where they took the CSF fluid from. When they are finished the doctor will stop giving you the medicine!

The doctors need to make sure your heart is beating correctly while they are giving you the special medicine so you will have to put some special stickers, called EKG stickers, on your chest. One will go by your right shoulder, one will go by your left shoulder and the last one will go down by your belly button (or on your tickle spot). These stickers will show how your heart is working.



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You will also have to wear a cool red light on your finger. This is called a pulse oximeter. A pulse oximeter measures how well you are breathing while the doctor is giving you your special medicine. Even though it looks like the light will pinch your finger it doesn't hurt at all! You can even have mom or dad try it first.



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When your stickers and red light are on the doctor will give you your special medicine. The sleepy medicine will be in a syringe and looks white like milk. If you have a central line you won't be able to feel the sleepy medicine. But if you have an IV in your arm, hand, or foot it may make you feel really warm. Taking deep breaths might help this funny feeling go away. Most children fall asleep before they can count to 5! If you get relaxing medicine instead of sleepy medicine you will stay awake. The relaxing medicine might make you feel a little funny but won't last forever!



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When the lumbar puncture is done your back might be a little sore. You will also have to lay down while the sleepy or relaxing medicine wears off.



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To learn more about lumbar punctures or spinal taps click on the link below. This link takes you to an interactive website that can help you understand more.

<http://spinaltap.starlightprograms.org/index.html>



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MINISTRY HEALTH CARE

MARSHFIELD, WISCONSIN

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