Lumbar Puncture (Spinal Tap)

What is a Lumbar Puncture?
Fluoroscopy is a special form of X-ray that produces real-time video images, as opposed to pictures on film, making it possible to see internal organs and joints in motion. A lumbar puncture (also called a spinal tap) is a fluoroscopic procedure used to collect and look at the cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) surrounding the brain and spinal cord.

CPT Code
62270 (77003 for fluoroscopic guidance)

Indications
Find a cause for symptoms caused by infection (meningitis), cancer, or subarachnoid hemorrhage. Diagnose diseases of the brain such as multiple sclerosis or Guillian-Barre Syndrome. Measure the CSF pressure in the space surrounding the spinal cord.

Contraindications
Skin infection near the site of the puncture, acute spinal cord trauma, suspicion of increased intracranial pressure due to a cerebral mass, pregnancy.

How Does Your Patient Prepare?
There is no special preparation required before the test. The technologist and radiologist should be informed if the patient is on blood thinners or other medications.

What Happens During the Test?
The technologist will obtain a medical history. The patient will be positioned face-down on the exam table. The radiologist will mark on the patient’s back with a pen where the puncture will occur. The area is cleansed with antiseptic soap and draped with sterile towels. A local anesthetic is put into the skin. A long thin needle is put in the spinal canal. When the needle is in place, the solid central core of the needle is removed. At this time, CSF is collected.

After the Exam
The patient will be asked to lie flat in bed with the head slightly raised for at least 30 minutes. The patient may be asked to drink extra fluids after the procedure to prevent headache.

The Results
A radiologist will analyze the images and send a signed report to the referring physician within one business day.

(Information adapted from Web MD and Dr. Paul Keller)

This information is intended for use as merely a guideline for referring physicians and their staff members only. It contains information pertaining to the most commonly ordered exams and indications. However, Shawnee Mission Medical Center Radiology does not recommend any particular examination. Individual radiologist preference or patient circumstances may dictate ordering alternative studies. Although contrast codes are not needed to place an order, the following contrast codes may be used in placing orders:
CT Contrast Q9967, MRI contrast A9577 and A9579.