

A lumbar drain is a small flexible tube inserted into the lower part of your child's back to drain cerebral spinal fluid (CSF). This tube is then connected to a hard plastic drainage system outside of your child. It is a short-term drainage system that allows fluid to drain from your child's brain.



What is cerebral spinal fluid (CSF)?

CSF is fluid that is made in chambers in the brain called the ventricles and it protects the brain and spinal cord by providing cushioning, support and nutrients.

Why does my child need a lumbar drain?

A lumbar drain is inserted to assist in the healing of a CSF leak that may occur after surgery. By having a lumbar drain it provides a different pathway for CSF to drain. The drain reduces CSF pressure on your child's head allowing the site of leakage to heal.

Nursing care of the lumbar drain

The nurse will monitor the drain very closely to ensure:

- > it is draining properly
- > the drain set up is correct
- > the dressing on your child's back is dry
- > the colour and amount of CSF draining is appropriate.

The nurse might take a sample of the CSF from the drain to monitor for any infection. The sample will be sent to pathology to be tested, and this is a routine test. How often samples need to be taken will depend on your child's condition and the medical officer's orders.

You must not clamp the drain yourself or adjust the height; only the nurse can do this.

Taking care of your child while the drain is inserted

The nursing staff will assist you with your child's needs such as a daily wash and position changes especially whilst the lumbar drain is in place.

Neurological assessment

The nursing staff will regularly check your child's temperature, blood pressure, pulse, respiratory rate, limb movements and pupil reaction. If your child is asleep when these observations are to be done, they will be woken. This includes during the night. Your child must be woken to ensure their neurological status is checked and that the drain is working correctly.

Please alert nursing staff immediately if your child complains of any of the following:

- > headaches
- > blurred vision
- > nausea or vomiting
- > irritability
- > drowsiness
- > tingling sensations in their arms or legs, or
- > does not seem "to be themselves".

Mobility

Depending on your child's condition and the medical officer's orders, your child may be able to walk as normal or may be restricted to bed. In either case the nurse must be informed of patient movement to make sure that the drain can be monitored and adjusted.

Daily wash/ evening backwash

Each day your child will have a wash in bed. This is to assess that your child's skin is not becoming reddened by the restricted mobility.

Lumbar Drain

Safety

If able, your child should be sat up to eat and drink, your nurse will assist you with changing their position as they need to adjust the drain. If your child is unable to sit up and is lying flat, they must be supervised at all times when eating and drinking to prevent them from choking.

Pain

The drain itself should not cause pain however Paracetamol will be available as needed and additional pain relief depending on your child's condition.

Play

You and your nurse will work together to ensure that your child keeps their hands away from their drain so that it is not accidentally dislodged, this can be done by providing play and distraction.

One of our play therapists will assist in providing appropriate toys and stimulation to encourage your child's mental, physical and social development.

Please feel free to bring in your child's favourite toys.

Play therapists are available Mon-Fri to help keep your child active and stimulated while the lumbar drain is in place.

After the drain is removed

The drain will be removed on the ward by the neurosurgery medical officer. Following removal, your child may need to lay flat for up to four hours to prevent headaches. The nurse will also regularly check the site where the drain was inserted to ensure there is no leak or sign of infection.

Questions

You and your child will be seen daily on the medical ward round. If you have any questions regarding your child's progress or care requirements, please ask the nurse caring for your child, the medical staff or the Neurosurgical Clinical Practice Coordinator (CPC).

For more information

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www.wch.sa.gov.au

Non-English speaking: for information in languages other than English, call the interpreting and Translating Centre and ask them to call Department of Health. This service is available at no cost to you, contact (08) 8226 1990.

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