

Spinal Tap

(The following is an excerpt from the Nemours Foundation, 2011)¹

"A spinal tap [also called lumbar puncture] allows the doctor to collect some of the cerebrospinal fluid that surrounds the brain and spinal cord. During a spinal tap, a person usually lies on his or her side, curled into a ball. First, the doctor will numb the skin with medication. (This is done to prevent pain.)

The person needs to lie very still while the doctor inserts a very thin needle into the spinal column. The needle is placed between two vertebral bones in the lower back away from the spinal cord. Fluid is removed and collected in some tubes. Then the needle is removed and the doctor puts a bandage over the area.

After it is collected, the spinal fluid will be examined under a microscope to see if any bacteria, cells, or

substances that indicate inflammation or infection are there. Usually by looking at the spinal fluid in this way, a doctor will be able to tell if it seems like someone has meningitis. The fluid will also be sent to a laboratory to be tested for bacteria and sometimes for viruses. Once the doctors know what germ is causing the meningitis, they can choose the best medicine to treat the infection. Treatment depends on the type of meningitis."¹

Source:

1. Nemours Foundation (2011). Meningitis [online]. Retrieved January 20, 2011. From http://kidshealth.org/PageManager.jsp?dn=KidsHealth&lic=1&ps=307&cat_id=20076&article_set=22055.



Educational programs of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin.
The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating