

## Patient information

# Information about a lumbar puncture

## What is a lumbar puncture?

Your baby was started on antibiotics due to risk factors for infection and/or clinical concerns which suggest the presence of infection.

When there is evidence of infection on your baby's blood test results, we may want to take a sample of the fluid that surrounds the spinal cord called cerebrospinal fluid. This fluid flows down from the brain, so analysing it should show whether the infection is present in this vital part of the nervous system.

## The procedure

If we need to take a sample we will do this either in the Neonatal Unit or in the treatment room on Rainbow Ward, depending on where your child is admitted. The procedure is done under sterile conditions to minimise any risk to your baby of further infection. Your baby may be offered some sucrose (sugar water) solution as simple pain relief during the procedure.

A small needle is used, and this is placed between two bones low in your baby's back. While many important nerves run through the spine, they will not be damaged because these nerves are all higher than the level where this needle is placed.' (For more information contact Bliss or visit the website – details below.)

## Results

The fluid sample will be sent to the laboratory for culture (growing and testing) to help decide the duration of the antibiotic treatment and whether further investigations are needed. The results should be available within 48 hours.

## When to seek medical help once you are at home with your baby

If your baby received antibiotics, or was observed for 12 hours due to a risk factor for infection, it is important to be aware of signs that suggest your baby is becoming unwell after discharge home.

You should seek medical help from your midwife, GP, NHS 111 or the Emergency Department if you are concerned that your baby has any of the following:

- Is showing abnormal behaviour (for example, inconsolable crying or listlessness)
- Is unusually floppy
- Has developed difficulties with feeding or with keeping feeds down
- Has a temperature lower than 36°C or higher than 38°C
- Has rapid breathing
- Has a change in skin colour (eg mottled/grey/blue)

## Where to get further information

- National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE), <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs75/ifp/chapter/Antibiotics-for-neonatal-infection>
- Bliss, 0500 618140, [www.bliss.org.uk](http://www.bliss.org.uk), <http://www.bliss.org.uk/lumbar-puncture>

### **Acknowledgements**

*This leaflet has been produced using the content produced by Luton and Dunstable University Hospital/Addenbrooke's Hospital.*

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