ICD-10-PCS: Lumbar Puncture

What is a Lumbar Puncture?

A lumbar puncture is a diagnostic and/or therapeutic procedure performed by a doctor. The procedure is performed by inserting a hollow needle into the epidural space in the lumbar area (lower back) of the spinal column. The subarachnoid space is the canal in the spinal column that carries cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) between the brain and the spinal cord. A lumbar puncture can help diagnose serious infections, and: • Meningitis;
• Other disorders of the central nervous system, such as Guillain-Barre syndrome and multiple sclerosis;
• Cancers of the brain or spinal cord.

Sometimes doctors use lumbar puncture to inject anesthetic medications or chemotherapy drugs into the cerebrospinal fluid. Other names for a lumbar puncture (an LP): • Spinal tap
• Spinal puncture
• Thecal puncture (thecal sac is a membrane of dura matter that surrounds the spinal cord and the cauda equina)

Other spinal punctures or punctures to obtain cerebral spinal fluid (CSF): • Ventricular puncture (this is a puncture into a lateral ventricle of the brain)
• Cisternal puncture (this is a surgical puncture into the cisterna at the base of the brain)

Normal results of a lumbar puncture typically range as follows:
• Pressure: 70 - 180 mm H20
• Appearance: clear, colorless
• CSF total protein: 15 - 60 mg/100 mL
• Gamma globulin: 3 - 12% of the total protein
• CSF glucose: 50 - 80 mg/100 mL or greater than 2/3 of blood sugar level
• CSF cell count: 0 - 5 white blood cells (all mononuclear), and no red blood cells
• Chloride: 110 - 125 mEq/L
• Note: mg/mL = milligrams per milliliter; mEq/L = milliequivalents per liter

What does the coder need to know?
• Was the procedure therapeutic or diagnostic? Therapeutic
• Was the procedure therapeutic or diagnostic? Diagnostic

What is the coder need to know?
• At what level was the procedure performed? Lumbar
• At what level was the procedure performed? Brain

Brief Example of a Lumbar Puncture Procedure 2:

Lumbar Puncture: After obtaining informed consent from the patient an LP was performed under the supervision of Dr. XYZ. The back was prepped and draped in sterile fashion. Landmarks were identified. The area was infiltrated with 1% Lidocaine. A 22 gauge spinal needle was inserted between L4 and L5. Approximately 3 mL of clear CSF was obtained on the first attempt. The needle was withdrawn and bandage applied. There were no complications and the patient tolerated the procedure well. Fluid was sent to the lab to determine if the patient has meningitis.

What is a Blood Patch?

An epidural blood patch is a surgical procedure that provides immediate relief to the headache caused by leaking spinal fluid. Approximately 15-20 ml of blood is taken from a vein in the patient's arm and subsequently injected into the epidural space in the spine at the site of the spinal fluid leak. The blood clots and seals the hole in the dura which stops fluid from leaking out. An epidural blood patch is a surgical procedure that provides immediate relief to the headache caused by leaking spinal fluid. Approximately 15-20 ml of blood is taken from a vein in the patient's arm and subsequently injected into the epidural space in the spine at the site of the spinal fluid leak. The blood clots and seals the hole in the dura which stops fluid from leaking out.