

# **BODY FLUIDS: Cerebrospinal Fluid**

**Dr Rana Hasanato**

**Clinical Biochemistry Unit, Pathology Dept.**

# CSF Definition & Functions

## ***CSF definition:***

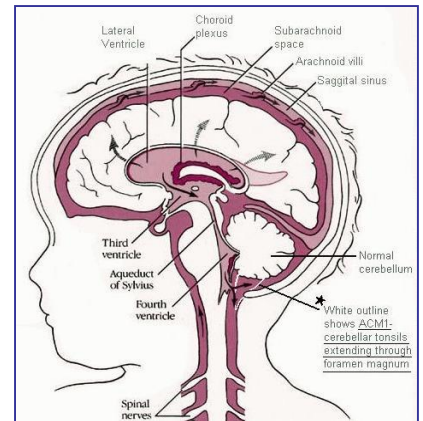
The liquid surrounding the brain and spinal cord  
It flows in subarachnoid area (the space between the arachnoid & pia matter)

## ***Main Functions:***

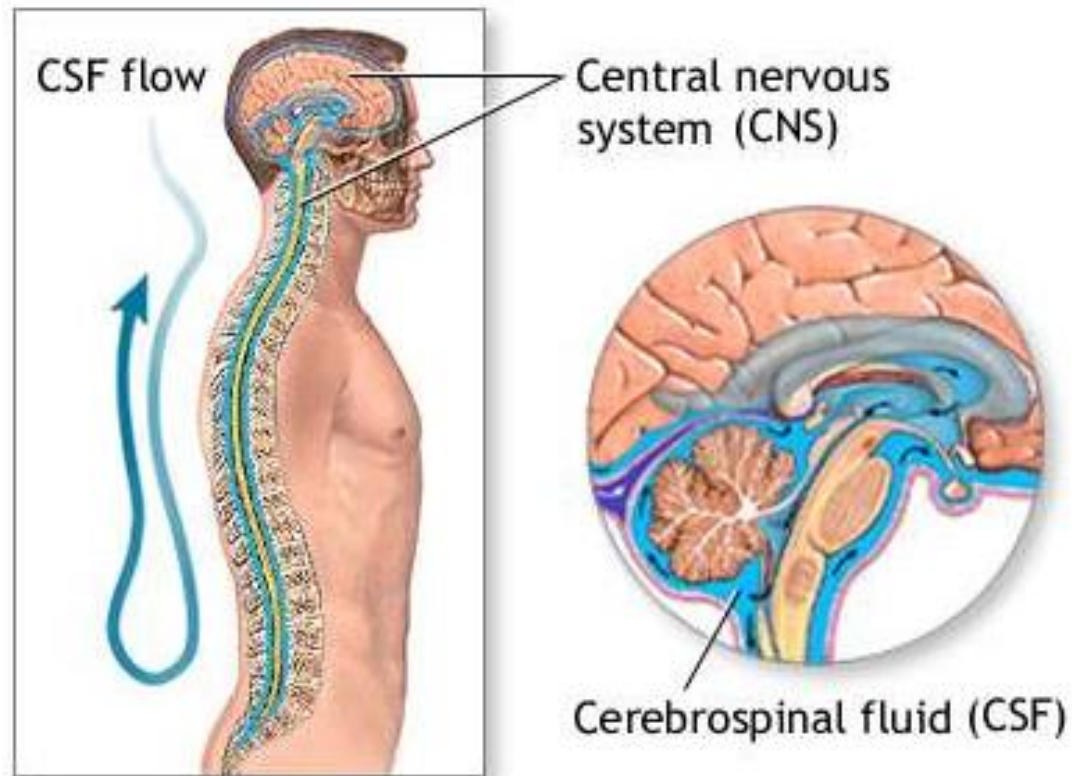
- Physical support & protection
- Provides a **controlled** chemical environment → nutrient supply & waste removal

# CSF Formation & Circulation

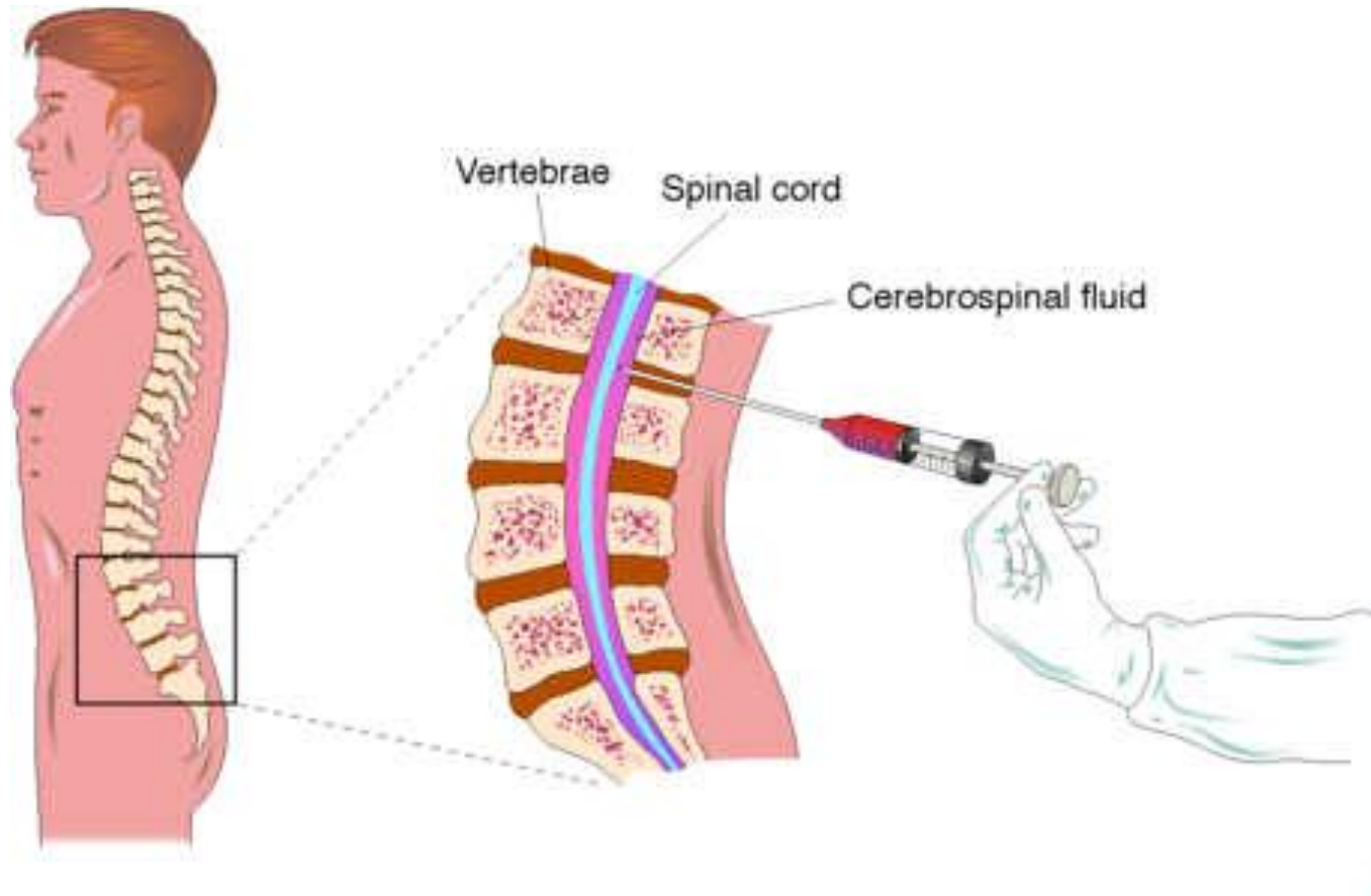
- CSF is formed at the choroid plexuses & by the cells lining the ventricles.
- Normal blood brain barrier is important for the normal chemistry results of CSF
- Rate of formation:
  - 500 ml/day
- Mechanism of formation:
  - Selective ultrafiltration of plasma
  - Active secretion by epithelial membranes
- Mechanism of excretion (absorption):
  - Excretion volume = production volume → constant CSF volume
  - Absorption occurs at the arachnoid villi protruding through the dura to the venous sinuses of the brain → bloodstream



# CSF Circulation



# Method of CSF Sampling



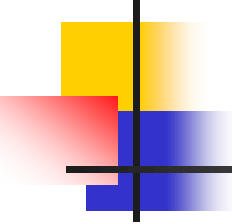
**Traumatic tap (damage to blood vessel during specimen collection)  
→ blood in CSF**



# CSF Specimen Collection

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- Obtained by **lumbar puncture** (At the interspace L3-4, or lower)
- Using **aseptic** technique
- CSF is **separated** into 2 aliquots:
  - for chemistry & serology
  - for microbiology
- **Immediate** analysis
- It's a **precious** sample: Preserve any remaining sample



# Contraindications for performing lumbar puncture:

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1. Bleeding diathesis
2. Increased intracranial pressure
3. Infection at site of needle insertion



# Indications for laboratory investigation of CSF:

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1. CNS *infection*
2. *Demyelinating* diseases
3. CNS *Malignancy*
4. *Hemorrhage* in CNS



# Examination of CSF:

## *1- Physical examination*

- **Normal CSF is:**
  - **Colorless**
  - **Clear**
  - **Free of clots**
  - **Free of blood**
- **If CSF is cloudy (turbid) → perform microscopic examination:**
  - **is usually due to leucocytes**
  - **may be due to micro-organisms**



# Blood & Hemoglobin pigments in CSF

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## *Traumatic tap*

- → bright red color
- → RBCS in decreasing number as the fluid is sampled

## *Subarachnoid hemorrhage (SAH)*

- → **Xanthochromia** (hemoglobin breakdown pigments) = RBCs lysis & metabolism previously occurred (at least 2 hr earlier)



# When would Xanthochromia indicate hemorrhage?

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- If you exclude:
  1. Prior traumatic tap
  2. Hyperbilirubinemia (*bilirubin > 20 mg/dL*)

# Examination of CSF:

## *2- Biochemical analysis of CSF*

### ■ Tests of interest:

- ✓ ■ Glucose
- ✓ ■ Protein
  - Total
  - Specific:
    - Albumin
    - Immunoglobulin
    - Others (e.g. myelin basic protein; MBP)
- Lactate

**The most reliable  
diagnostically &  
accessible analytically**

# Glucose in CSF

- Glc enters CSF via facilitative transporter (**GLUT**)
- CSF [glucose] is  $\sim 2/3$  that of plasma
  - **50 - 80 mg/dl**
- A **plasma sample** must be obtained  $\sim 2-4$  hr before CSF sample
  - In hypoglycemia: [CSF glucose] may be very low
  - In hyperglycemia: [CSF glucose] is raised.
- Measure CSF [Glucose]:
  - **immediately**
  - or preserve the specimen with and **antiglycolytic** e.g. fluoride ion



# Abnormal CSF [Glucose]

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- **↑ CSF [glucose]:**
  - Not clinically informative
  - Provides only confirmation of hyperglycemia
- **↓ CSF [glucose] :**
  1. Disorder in carrier-mediated transport
    - e.g. TB meningitis, sarcoidosis
  2. Active metabolism of glucose by cells or organisms:
    - e.g. acute purulent, amebic, & fungal meningitis
  3. Increased metabolism by the CNS
    - e.g. by CNS neoplasm
- In **viral meningitis** CSF [glucose] is usually normal

# Protein in CSF

- **Proteins, mostly albumin are found in the CSF (0.15-0.45 g/L)**
- **Source of CSF proteins:**
  - **80% from plasma by ultrafiltration**
  - **20% from intrathecal synthesis**

# Abnormal CSF [total proteins]

## ↑ CSF [total protein]:

- **Must be compared to the serum [protein]**
- Useful nonspecific indicator of pathological states:
  - Lysis of contaminant blood (traumatic tap)
  - ↑ permeability of the epithelial membrane due to:
    - Bacterial or fungal infection
    - Cerebral hemorrhage
  - ↑ production by CNS tissue in:
    - Multiple sclerosis (MS)
    - Subacute Sclerosing Panencephalitis (SSPE)
  - Obstruction e.g. in:
    - Tumors
    - Abscess





# CSF Albumin

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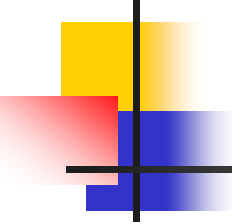
- Albumin is produced solely in the liver
- Its presence in CSF must occur through BBB



# CSF Immunoglobulin

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- CSF IgG can arise:
  - from *plasma cells* within CSF
  - from the *blood* through BBB
- ↑ [IgG] and normal [Alb] of CSF suggests local production of IgG, e.g.,
  - Multiple sclerosis (MS)
  - Subacute sclerosing panencephalitis (SSPE)

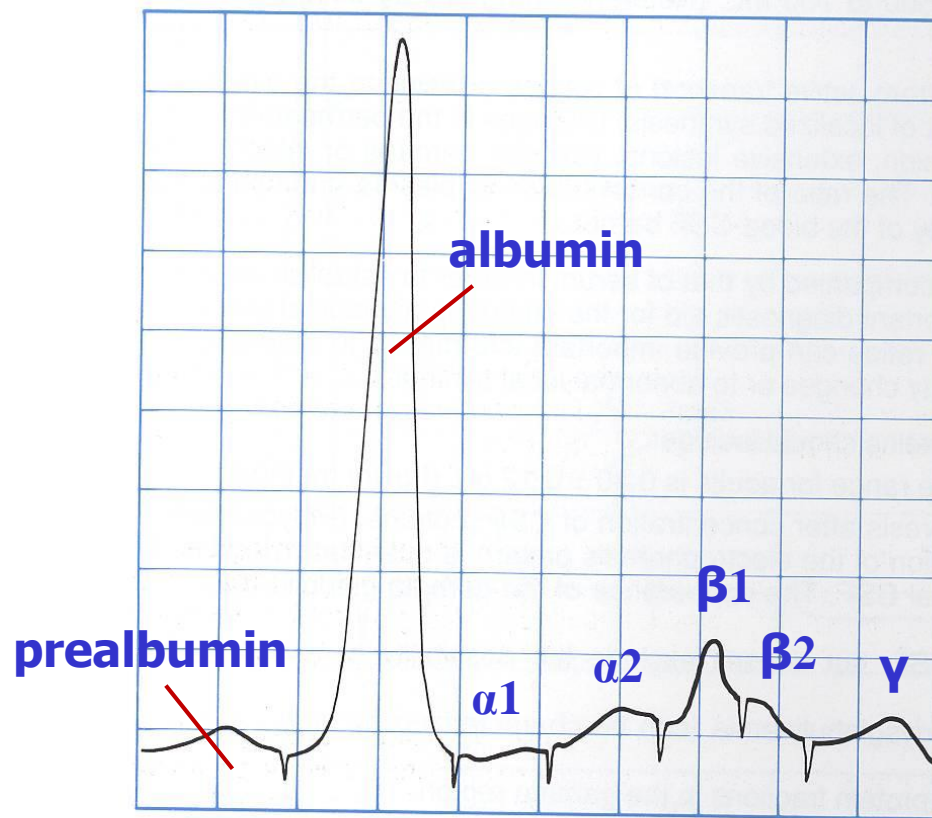


# What to do if $\uparrow$ CSF [protein] was detected?

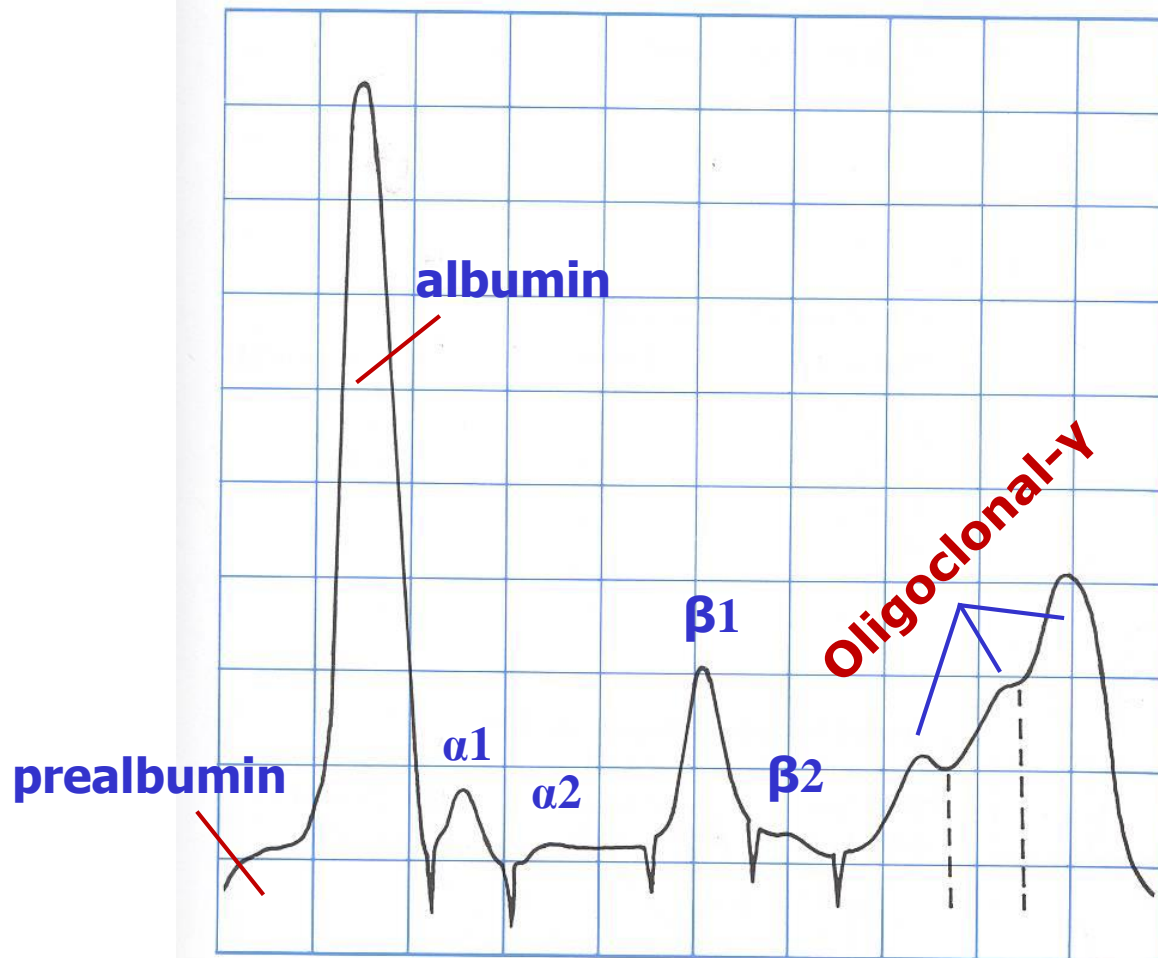
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- Perform electrophoretic separation
- If multiple banding (*oligoclonal bands*) of the  $\gamma$ -globulin is detected, the following differential diagnosis is suspected:
  - MS
  - SSPE
  - inflammatory diseases

# CSF Electrophoresis: Normal Pattern



# CSF Electrophoresis: Oligoclonal Banding



# Other Chemical Components of CSF

- CSF [**Calcium**], [**Potassium**] & [**Phosphates**] are lower than their levels in the blood
- CSF [**Chloride**] & [**Magnesium**] are higher than their levels in the blood
- Abnormal CSF [Chloride]
  - marked ↓↓ in acute bacterial meningitis
  - slight ↓ in viral meningitis & brain tumors

# Normal composition of CSF

<b>Appearance</b>	<b>Clear ,Colorless</b>
<b>Lymphocytes</b>	<b>&lt;5/mm<sup>3</sup></b>
<b>Polymorphs</b>	<b>Nil</b>
<b>pH</b>	<b>7.4</b>
<b>Total Volume</b>	<b>100 - 150 ml</b>
<b>Daily Secretion</b>	<b>450 - 500 ml</b>
<b>Specific Gravity</b>	<b>1.006 - 1.007</b>
<b>Protein</b>	<b>0.15 – 0.45 g/L</b>
<b>Glucose</b>	<b>50 - 80 mg/dL (2.8-4.2 mmol/L) (&gt;50% plasma level)</b>
<b>Chloride</b>	<b>115 - 130 mmol /L</b>
<b>Calcium</b>	<b>1.0 - 1.40 mmol/L</b>
<b>Phosphorus</b>	<b>0.4 - 0.7 mmol/L</b>
<b>Magnesium</b>	<b>1.2 - 1.5 mmol/L</b>
<b>Potassium</b>	<b>2.6 - 3.0 mmol/L</b>

# Abnormal findings of CSF in some pathological conditions

Parameter	Condition		
	<b>Bacterial Meningitis (pyogenic)</b>	<b>Tuberculous Meningitis</b>	<b>Viral Meningitis</b>
Appearance	Often turbid	Often fibrin web	Usually clear
Predominant cell	Polymorphs	Mononuclear (lymphocytes)	Mononuclear (lymphocytes)
Cell count/mm <sup>3</sup>	90-1000+	10-1000	50-1000
Bacteria/virus	+ve smear & culture	Often none in smear	-ve smear or culture



# Abnormal findings of CSF in some pathological conditions, continued..

Parameter (reference range)	Condition		
	Bacterial Meningitis (pyogenic)	Tuberculous Meningitis	Viral Meningitis
Protein (0.15-0.45 g/L)	>1.5 (↑ ↑)	1-5 (↑ ↑)	<1 (Normal)
Glucose (2.8-4.2 mmol/L)	<1/2 plasma (↓ ↓)	<1/2 plasma (↓ ↓)	>1/2 plasma (Normal or slightly ↓)
Chlorides (115 - 130 mmol/L)	↓ ↓	↓ ↓	Normal or ↓



# Otorrhea & Rhinorrhea

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- **Otorrhea**: leakage of CSF from the ear
- **Rhinorrhea**: leakage of CSF into the nose



# TAKE HOME MESSAGE

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- CSF is formed in the choroid plexus
- It is essential for the physical protection of the CNS
- The physical & chemical analysis of CSF is essential for diagnosis of certain diseases



THANK YOU

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