

Emergency Plan

Patients with infection-like symptoms (see over page) should initiate their emergency antibiotics immediately and consult a doctor or present to the local emergency department as soon as possible.

Where to get more information:

Spleen Australia

<https://spleen.org.au/VSR/index.html>

NSW Health

Fact Sheet - Spleen Disorders

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/Factsheets/spleen-removal.pdf>

or

Contact your local doctor/GP.

Spleen Removal After Injury

What Do I Need To Know?

Trauma Department
Liverpool Hospital

Vaccination Recommendations

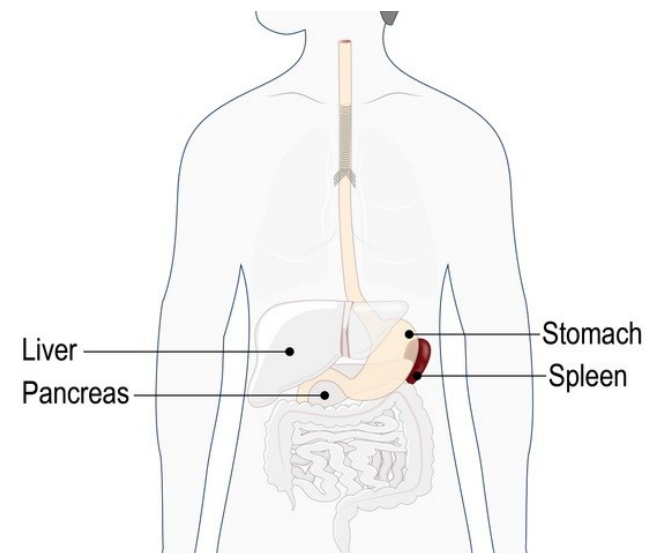
Prior to Discharge :

1. Pneumococcus
2. Meningococcus
3. Haemophilus influenza type b (Hib)
4. Influenza—ask your local doctor/ GP about influenza vaccine for seasonal flu
5. Zoster Vaccine—if you are over 60 years ask your local doctor/GP about protection against shingles

Some vaccines are required to be repeated yearly or every 5th year.

A Vaccination Chart will be given to you.

Please consult your local doctor/GP for ongoing advice.



supported by SWSLHD

Consumer and Community Participation

Publication date: May 2019

Catalogue No.: 19/0001



Health
South Western Sydney
Local Health District

What Does The Spleen Do?

Although the spleen is not essential to life, the spleen is an organ that performs a number of important functions including filtering harmful organisms from the bloodstream. If the spleen is surgically removed (e.g. after injury) a minor infection can potentially develop into a life threatening infection known as sepsis.

What Are The Risks?

The risk of infection is highest within the first two years after the spleen has been removed, although you still remain at risk of infection for the rest of your life.

What types of infection are you at risk of:

- **Septicaemia:** this occurs when bacteria multiply in the bloodstream. Symptoms are flu-like illness, fevers, hot and cold shivers.
- **Pneumonia:** this happens when bacteria infect the lung. Symptoms are fevers, cough and shortness of breath.
- **Malaria and Babesia:** if you are travelling to countries where these diseases occur you must consult your doctor prior to travel.

Other Risks

Travelling Abroad

Some countries are considered higher risk as some diseases that are not found in Australia (e.g. malaria) can significantly affect people without a spleen and you may require additional vaccinations before travelling. Please consult with your doctor.

Blood Clot

Some patients can have an increase in platelets in the blood (Thrombocytosis) which can lead to an increased risk of blood clot formation. A simple blood test can detect an increase. Often no treatment is required or selective use of low dose aspirin may be prescribed by your local doctor/GP until it returns to normal.

How To Reduce The Risks

- **Antibiotics:** Carry a full (prescribed) course of antibiotics with you at all times. If signs of infection start, commence the dose prescribed and consult a doctor.
- **Vaccines:** Get vaccinated and keep up to date (these will change from time to time so its crucial to see your doctor regularly). Experts recommend that people without a functional spleen have certain vaccinations to reduce the risk of sepsis. Although these vaccines do not prevent all infections they can protect most people and reduce the severity of infection (see last page and discuss with your doctor).
- **Medical Alert and ID card:** Carry a medical alert stating you have had a splenectomy (that is, an engraved bracelet, necklace or card). We will provide a bracelet on discharge. These can also be purchased from most pharmacies.
- **Hygiene:** Germs are most easily spread through hand contact. One of the best ways to stop the spread of germs is to wash or decontaminate your hands with good hand hygiene.

When To Seek Medical Attention

You should begin antibiotic treatment and seek medical care at the earliest sign or symptom of infection including any one or more of the following:

- Fever greater than 38°C
- Uncontrollable chills and/or shivering
- Drowsiness, confusion, and/or disorientation
- Nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhoea
- Severe abdominal pain / severe headache
- Pinpoint purplish red spots on the skin or larger, bluish bruises
- Low blood pressure, light-headedness or fainting
- Rapid heart rate
- After animal bites (dogs, cats, ticks)

On Discharge From Hospital

Once you have been discharged from hospital it is important that you inform your local doctor/ GP of your hospitalisation and treatment.

Make an appointment to see your local doctor/ GP within three days of discharge.

Take your hospital discharge summary with you. This summary tells the local doctor/GP what has happened, tests done and what should happen with your care.

Inform All Healthcare Providers:

Inform all doctors, dentists, and nurses that your spleen has been removed, especially when seeing new health care practitioners in an urgent care setting or emergency department.