



Government of **Western Australia**  
East Metropolitan Health Service  
Royal Perth Bentley Group



Patient Information

# **Important facts** after your splenectomy



Royal Perth  
Hospital



# Important information for after your splenectomy

## What is a splenectomy?

Located underneath the ribcage on the left side, the spleen is part of the body's defence system, with its main function to produce antibodies that help protect the body from certain types of bacterial infections, and removes bacteria from the blood stream during an infection.

**A splenectomy is an operation to remove the spleen. Although a spleen is an important part of the human body, there are times when a splenectomy may be required, such as when the spleen has:**

- › been injured by trauma
- › been damaged by disease
- › a growth or tumor
- › become overactive

**Due to the removal of your spleen during a splenectomy, it is important to know that you will be at a higher risk of developing infections in the future and that important steps to prevent such infections are required.**



# After your splenectomy

## While in hospital

The medical team will advise you of your injuries and your treatment/ The medical staff will inform you if you require more monitoring, which may mean moving you to a more appropriate area.

- › During your recovery in hospital, if possible, you will be encouraged to sit up and move around after your surgery to aid in your recovery
- › While resting in bed, it is important to keep your chest healthy by participating in deep breathing and coughing exercises to avoid infection. The ward physiotherapist will provide you with directions on how to perform these exercises.
- › Prevention of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is important after surgery. While you are in hospital, you will be fitted with anti-embolic stockings, calf pumps, and may be given blood thinning medication, when and if appropriate. To assist in the prevention of deep vein thrombosis, you are encouraged to move your legs and feet regularly whilst in bed.
- › The medical team will discuss discharge planning when appropriate

## Diet

If your spleen has been injured by trauma you may be required to fast, and will be given fluids by an intravenous drip. This is to exclude intestinal injury and to ensure you are prepared in the event you become rapidly unwell and require urgent surgery. As you recover, the medical staff will allow you to progress to a normal diet.

Good nutrition is important to help your body heal. A ward dietician may see you to assist you with your nutritional goals.

# Splenectomy and Vaccinations

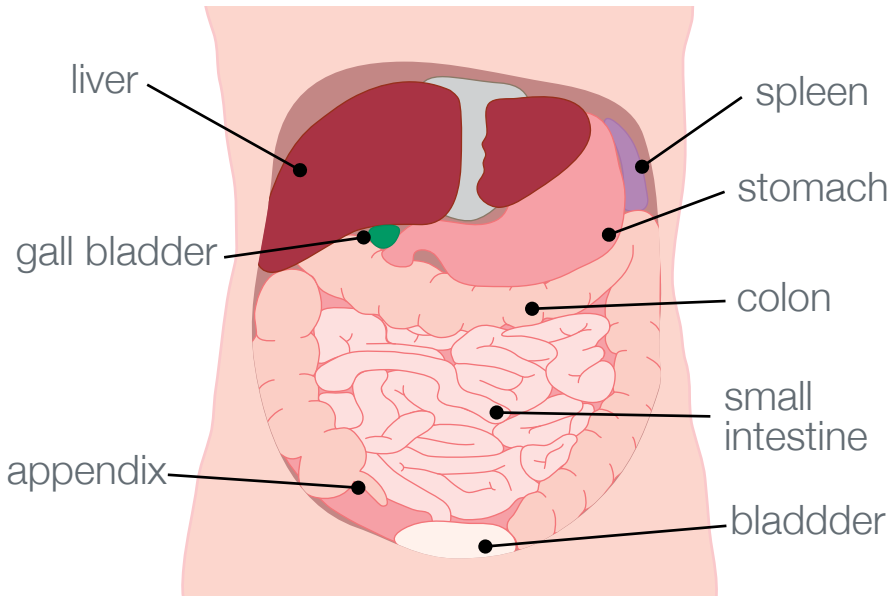
After a splenectomy, you will have a greater risk of developing severe infections, with the greatest risk of infection occurring within three (3) years from the splenectomy. To assist with reducing the risk of infection, you will require immunisation with certain vaccines.

Prior to hospital discharge, you should ideally receive the following vaccines:

Vaccine	Treatment
Prevenar 13® – Pneumococcal vaccine	Protects against 13 strains of Pneumococcal bacteria. This vaccine is given in hospital and no boosters are required.
Pneumovax 23® – Pneumococcal vaccine	Protects against 23 strains of Pneumococcal bacteria. This vaccine is required from eight (8) weeks after Prevenar 13® and must be received before 12 months after Prevenar 13®. A second dose is required 5 years later.
Meningococcal groups: A, C, W135 and Y vaccine.	An initial dose will be given while you are in hospital. A second dose is required 8 weeks (or at least 8 weeks) after the initial hospital dose, followed by a booster injection every five years.
Meningococcal group B vaccine - Bexsero® (brand-specific)	An initial dose will be given while you are in hospital. A second dose is required 8 weeks (or at least 8 weeks) after the initial hospital dose. No boosters required.

Vaccine	Treatment
Haemophilus influenzae type b vaccine	An initial dose will be given while you are in hospital. No further doses required after the initial hospital dose.
Influenza vaccine	Annual doses are recommended.
COVID-19 vaccine	Spleen Australia encourages the COVID-19 vaccine.

The above vaccines are current recommendations for adults >18 years, who have not previously been vaccinated. The vaccines you receive may vary from the above regimen depending on your prior vaccinations. Please speak with the ward pharmacist if you have any questions.



## Discharge and follow-up

Upon discharge, you will be commenced on an antibiotic, which will also protect you against certain infections. This is to be continued for at least three years or lifelong. Your General Practitioner (GP) will advise you.

After discharge, medical staff may continue to monitor your injury in the outpatient clinic or may ask your general practitioner (GP) to manage your care. Your GP will be sent a copy of your discharge summary and a letter regarding when vaccinations are next due.

Please take your vaccination card from Royal Perth Hospital to your GP and ask them to enter your vaccinations into the Australian Immunisation Register.

Your sutures or staples are generally removed after 14 days either by your GP or in the outpatient clinic. If your wound becomes red, or if there is discharge from it, see your GP as this may indicate an infection.

### To protect your injury, you must:

- › Not take part in contact sports for the next three months
- › Not lift any weight heavier than 10kg for at least six weeks
- › Be careful not to get hit in the chest or abdomen

Without a spleen, minor infections may become serious. The following are some of the signs of potential infection after your surgery:

- › Abdominal pain
- › Fever
- › Nausea and/or vomiting

Call Health Direct **1800 022 222**, see your GP immediately, or attend your local Emergency Department. Remember to tell them you have had a splenectomy.

## Important information

- › When visiting your dentist or doctor/GP remind them that you do not have a spleen.
- › Animal bites/scratches should be reviewed by a doctor
- › Your family and friends should know about your increased lifelong risk of bacterial infections and prevention strategies (i.e. vaccinations, antibiotics and doctor reviews)
- › Seek medical advice from specialised travel medicine clinic prior to travelling overseas. Anti-malaria medication is important if you are travelling to certain countries. Other vaccines may also be required.
- › You may develop high platelets after your spleen is removed and your doctor may prescribe you aspirin until your levels normalise.
- › You will be required to obtain a medic alert bracelet:  
[www.medicalert.com.au](http://www.medicalert.com.au)
- › Further information regarding the vaccination schedule can be found at <https://spleen.org.au/vaccinations/>

## Further information

For any further information, please contact the Trauma Unit on 9224 1444 or the Trauma Case Manager on 0404 894 241.

