

Surgical Oncology Splenectomy & Post-Splenectomy Vaccines

The Spleen

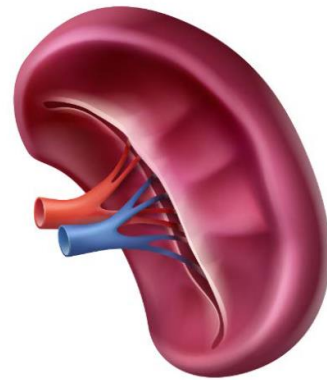
The spleen is an organ in the abdomen that filters the blood and helps you fight infection.

After your spleen is removed, it is very important to have vaccines for the rest of your life. Without a spleen, you are at an ongoing risk for life-threatening infections with certain bacteria (such as *Streptococcus pneumoniae*), viruses, parasites and other infections that the spleen plays an important role in controlling. Vaccines will help you fight these infections.

Important measures for preventing infections include:

- Patient and family education
- Taking vaccines against certain bacteria and the flu
- Taking antibiotics before surgeries and dental procedures

Your immune function should generally recover after surgery.



The spleen

Vaccines Are Important

Receiving initial and booster vaccines helps reduce the risk of severe infection, or even death, from harmful bacteria.

The most common vaccine-preventable causes of severe infections in patients without a spleen are:

- Pneumonia - *S. pneumoniae* (pneumococcus)
- The flu - *H. influenzae* type b
- Meningitis - *N. meningitidis* (meningococcus)

See the recommendations on splenectomy vaccines from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Your doctors will prescribe these vaccines, often before or soon after your spleen is removed. The vaccines will usually require booster shots every 5 years.

Special Instructions

Because infections in people without a spleen can progress quickly, go to the nearest hospital emergency center right away if you develop any of the following symptoms:

- A fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher
- Uncontrolled chills or shivers
- Drowsiness or confusion
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Rapid heart rate
- Severe abdominal pain
- Tiny skin spots that are red/purple color (petechiae) or larger bluish bruises
- Low blood pressure, lightheaded, feel faint and pass out

Tell the doctor that you do not have a spleen. You will often receive a prescription for antibiotics to treat infection. These problems are rare and are usually very easy to treat. Always seek medical attention for a fever or any of the above.

Emergency Center

In case of any emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency center. *For non-emergencies during business hours, call our triage line at 904-202-7300 option 3.*