

## What can I do to reduce my risk of infection?

- **Be immunized before or after surgery**

Your surgeon will arrange this.

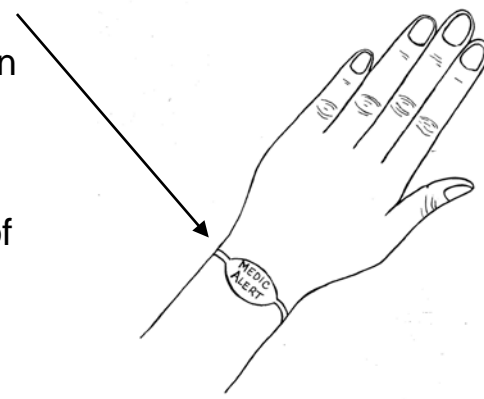
- **Keep your vaccinations up-to-date**

Keep a record of the date you are due for your next vaccination and see your family doctor at that time.

- **Wear medical alert identification**

Also carry a patient information card in your wallet that says you do not have a spleen.

This card should also have a record of names and dates of all vaccines you have had.



- **Follow a healthy lifestyle**

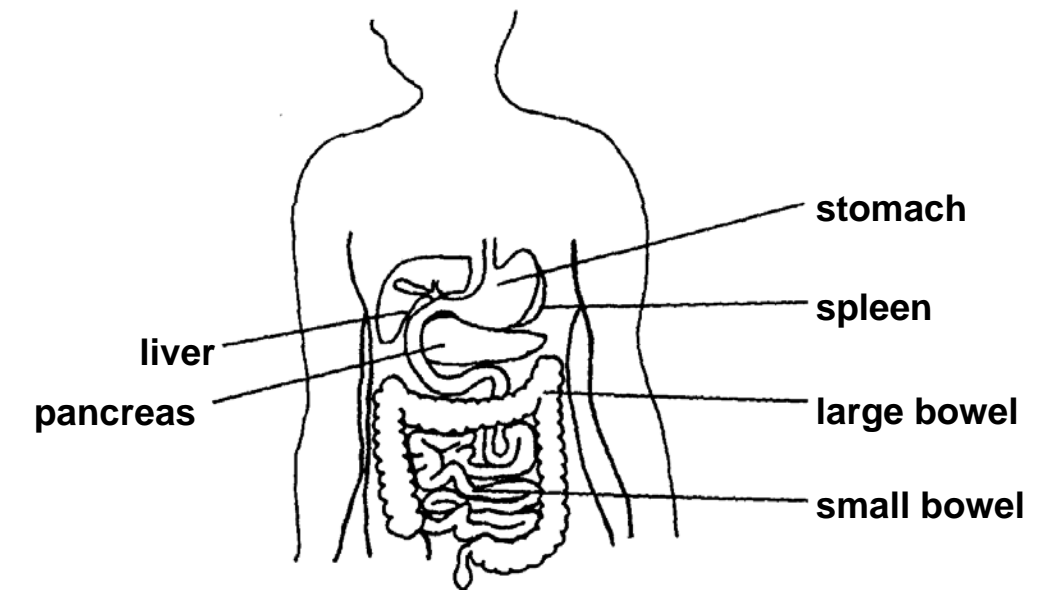
To help keep you healthy, eat a balanced diet, exercise regularly, get adequate rest and sleep and learn how to relax and manage stress.

There are members of the health care team who can help you make healthy lifestyle changes.

## Splenectomy

### What is a spleen?

The spleen is an organ in the upper left side of the abdomen, behind the stomach. The spleen filters blood and removes bacteria. It helps the body to fight infections.



### What is an open splenectomy?

An open splenectomy is surgery to remove the spleen. When a spleen is removed, the functions of the spleen are taken over by other parts of the body such as the liver.

## What do I need to do before surgery?

If you are having planned surgery, you will be immunized before surgery. The immunization helps protect you from 3 main types of infections: Haemophilus influenzae, Streptococcus pneumoniae and Neisseria meningitidis. If your surgery is not planned, you will be immunized after surgery.

Arrange for someone to help you around the house, and do errands for you when you come home after surgery.

Follow the pre-op checklist and medication instructions that were given to you at your pre-op visit.

Follow the times you are to stop eating and drinking, and when you need to come to the hospital.

## What happens during surgery?

You will be given a general anesthetic which will put you to sleep during the surgery. You will be given fluids and medications through an IV (intravenous) in your arm. The IV will be taken out when you can drink fluids and take medications by mouth.

You may also have a tube called a catheter in your bladder to drain urine during surgery. This will be removed when you can pass urine on your own.

During surgery, the surgeon will make an incision (cut) in the upper left part of your abdomen or down the middle of your abdomen to see the spleen. The tissues, organs and blood vessels around the spleen will be clamped and the spleen is removed. The incision is closed with clips, staples or stitches and covered with a dressing.

Some people have laparoscopic surgery. Three or 4 small incisions are made in the abdomen. A thin, lighted tube is put into one incision for the surgeon to see. Special gas inflates the abdomen so the surgeon has room to operate. The doctor then uses the other incisions to put instruments in to remove the spleen.

You will feel pain from your incision after surgery. Medication can help to control your pain. Your nurse will check your incision and change the dressing if needed. It is normal to have some drainage around your incision after surgery.

If you had laparoscopic surgery, the incisions will be very small. You may also feel pain in your left shoulder. This pain is from the gas put into your abdomen. It helps to get up and move around so your body can absorb the gas and relieve the pain.

After general anesthetic, you may feel sick to your stomach. If you have these feelings, tell your nurse. Your nurse can give you medications to help.

## When can I eat?

Your nurse on the ward will tell you when you can start drinking fluids and eating after your surgery.

## What can I expect after surgery?

When your spleen is gone, you may be at an increased risk of developing an infection even after you have been immunized. It is very important to follow your doctor's instructions after surgery.

## How do I know if I have an infection?

The signs of an infection are:

- ✓ fever – a temperature greater than 38°C or 100°F
- ✓ sore throat, cough
- ✓ nausea, vomiting
- ✓ stomach pain
- ✓ shaking and chills
- ✓ skin rash
- ✓ headache
- ✓ drowsiness
- ✓ pain on passing urine

Contact your doctor or go to the Emergency Department if you develop these signs of infection.

**Tell all doctors and health professionals that you do not have a spleen.**