

## Post Traumatic Splenectomy Care

### Getting Ready to Learn About Post Traumatic Splenectomy

Learning something new can be hard. It is even harder if you are not feeling well. The purpose of this education plan is for you and the staff to review this information together. Here are some good things to tell the staff:

- Who you want to learn with you. We would like to have someone who will be helping you at home learn with you.
- The best way for you to learn. Do you learn best by reading a book or pamphlet, or by doing things yourself?
- If you are not feeling well, if you are in pain or you cannot focus on learning right now.

This information is important to your health. We may explain something more than once. We will be giving you information in small bits over several days. If there is something you don't understand, *It's OK to Ask* us to explain.

### What I Need to Learn About Post Traumatic Splenectomy

By the time I leave the hospital I will be able to show or tell the staff:

1. How I will be cared for in the hospital after splenectomy.
2. What I need to know about living without my spleen.
3. What are the signs and symptoms of infection and when to contact my doctor.
4. How to prevent infections.
5. What vaccines are important for me to receive.

### The staff will use three questions to teach me about Post Traumatic Splenectomy

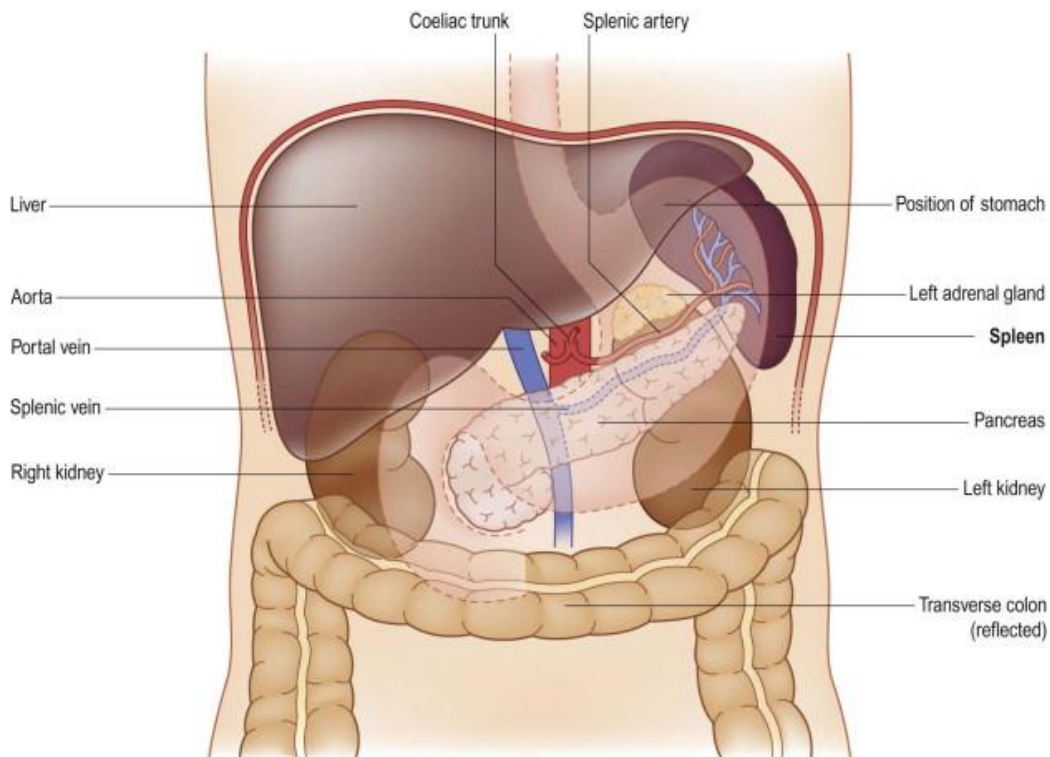
1. What is my main problem?
2. What do I need to do?
3. Why is this important to me?

The staff will ask me to repeat back important points in my own words, or ask me to show what I have learned. They want to make sure that I know about my medication and how to take it safely and correctly.

### **What is my main problem?**

#### What is the Spleen?

The spleen is an organ located in the left upper side of my abdomen. If my spleen is damaged it may sometimes become necessary to remove it in order to prevent life-threatening bleeding. I am asplenic when my spleen has been removed.



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#### What does the Spleen do?

The spleen removes old blood cells from the body. The spleen also helps prevent infection by removing bacteria from my blood.

## Traumatic Injury to the Spleen

Traumatic injury to the spleen occurs most often after a blunt injury. Common causes of spleen injury include:

- Motor vehicle accidents
- Falls
- Assault
- Sports-related injuries

Spleen injuries are graded on a scale of I to V based on how severe the injury. A Grade V splenic laceration is the worst and is described as a shattered spleen.

### **Care in the hospital after a splenectomy**

After my splenectomy I will be closely monitored in the hospital. I will have care that includes:

- Frequent labs to monitor my blood levels.
  - After a splenectomy my white blood cell and platelet level will increase significantly. This is normal and usually peaks around 1-3 weeks after surgery before it returns to normal.
  - Checking my red blood cell levels to see if I need a blood transfusion.
- Pain control
  - I will take the medicine my doctor ordered to manage my pain.
  - I will take the medicine before the pain gets too bad. The medicine works best if I take it before the pain is too bad.
- Preventing complications
  - Use my incentive spirometer frequently. This helps prevent pneumonia.
  - Get up out of bed as soon as I am able and walk frequently. This helps prevent pneumonia and blood clots.
- I will need to get three vaccines before leaving the hospital to protect myself from severe illness.

**What do I need to do?**

I will be able to tell the staff about what I need to know after a splenectomy.

It is possible to live a normal life without my spleen. It is important to follow certain steps to protect myself. I need to let my doctor and other care providers know that I do not have my spleen.

- Tell my care providers, including my dentist, that I do not have my spleen. This is important before any surgeries or invasive procedures.
- In some cases it may be necessary to take antibiotics. Talk with my doctor or dentist.
- Consider wearing a medical alert bracelet to let emergency providers know that I am asplenic.
- Take extra precautions to prevent getting an infection.
- Make sure my vaccines are up to date.
- Make sure to tell my care provider before I travel outside of the country

I will be able to tell the staff the signs and symptoms of infection.

- Temperature over 101
- Chills, sweating
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Headache
- Severe abdominal pain
- Light-headedness, fainting or dizziness
- Drowsiness, confusion or disorientation
- Difficulty breathing or cough that doesn't go away.
- Skin rash when not feeling well
- If I am experiencing any combination of these symptoms, I will call my doctor.

I will be able to tell the staff how I will prevent infection.

Without my spleen I am at higher risk for infection. Severe infection is rare and most often occurs within the first few years after splenectomy.

- Reduce exposure to people with infection or contagious illness.
- Prevent exposure to ticks that can carry disease.
  - Wear long pants, sleeves, socks and shoes in the woods.
  - Avoid long grass
  - Make sure to check my skin and clothing after being outdoors.
- Try to prevent cuts and scrapes, treat and cover them as needed.
- Monitor myself for illness and infection and contact my doctor **early**.

I will be able to tell the staff the about what vaccines are important for me to receive after my splenectomy.

Because I am at an increased risk of infection, it is important to get some vaccines before I leave the hospital. I will need these even if I have had them before. It is also important to talk with my doctor about staying current on vaccines after I leave the hospital. Vaccines after a traumatic splenectomy are given **14 days** after surgery or before I leave the hospital. The following vaccines are recommended to prevent pneumonia, blood infections and meningitis.

- Pneumococcal vaccine
- Meningococcal vaccine
- Haemophilus vaccine
- Annual flu vaccine

### **Why is this important to me?**

Following these instructions will help to keep me healthy and allow me to live a normal, active life after a splenectomy.

## Post Traumatic Splenectomy

### Resources

- **See Teaching Tools**

### Teaching Tools

- *Post Traumatic Splenectomy care teaching plan*

### References

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Always close each teaching session with the question, “What questions do you have for me?”

\*This page is intended for staff use only. Do not give to the patient. This document is not a part of the permanent medical record.