Splenectomy after Trauma

About the Spleen
The spleen is an organ in your abdomen. It is often injured in accidents. Your spleen works as a filter for your blood. It is a vital part of your immune system. If your spleen has severe damage, it may be harmful to your health. A spleen that is injured can bleed into the abdomen. This may cause life-threatening blood loss or infection. It may also cause damage to your pancreas.

Treatment after Spleen Injury
If the damage to your spleen is minimal, your health care team will monitor bleeding through serial abdominal exams and monitoring your blood counts and vital signs often.

If the damage to your spleen is severe, your doctor may decide that it is best to remove it.

Although your spleen is a major part of your immune system, you can live without it. If your spleen needs to be removed, you will need to be careful with infections in the future. Infections for a person with no spleen can be very serious. Sometimes, they may even be fatal. Although the chance this may happen is very small, you need to take proper care.

Vaccines
The spleen protects against certain types of organisms. If you have your spleen removed, you will need to get vaccines to protect yourself. These vaccines include:

- **Pneumococcal vaccine**: You will get this vaccine before you leave the hospital. (You may need to get an additional pneumococcal in 8 weeks and then repeat this vaccine every five years. – talk to your PCP about need for vaccine at 8 weeks.)
- **Haemophilus B vaccine**: You will get this vaccine before you leave the hospital, then you are done.
- **Meningococcal vaccine (Menactra)**: You will get this vaccine before you leave the hospital. You will also need to get another Menactra in 2 months after your first dose. It needs to be repeated every 5 years.
- **Meningococcal B vaccine (Bexsero)**: You will get this vaccine before you leave the hospital. You will need to get an additional Bexsero in 2 months after your first dose, then you are done.
- **Influenza (flu) vaccine**: You will get this vaccine before you leave the hospital, if you haven’t already had it for the year. You will need to get this vaccine every year.
Other Steps to Prevent Infection

- You will need to carry a supply of antibiotics with you, mainly when you travel to places that may not have quick access to health care. Consult with your primary care doctor on this.
- If you are traveling to a place where you will be exposed to malaria, you will always need to take medicine to prevent malaria.
- Special care should also be taken to prevent animal or tick bites. If you do get bitten, you will need to see a doctor.

You Should Seek Medical Attention RIGHT AWAY if

- You have a temperature of 100.4°F or higher for two readings taken 4 hours apart.
- You have a severe sore throat, unexplained cough or severe abdominal pain.
- You have flu-like symptoms such as chills, uncontrollable shivering, or body aches.

We suggest that you wear a MedicAlert bracelet or necklace and carry a wallet card stating that you have no spleen.

MedicAlert Foundation International
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1-800-432-5378
www.medicalert.org

Tell any new health care professionals, including dentists, that your spleen was removed.

Once your spleen is removed, you will always need to follow these steps to protect yourself.