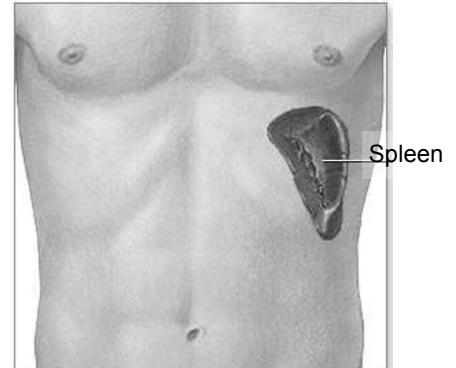


Splenectomy

What is the spleen?

The spleen is an organ above your stomach and under your ribs on your left side. When blood flows through the spleen, bacteria are taken out. The spleen helps the body fight against some infections. It also removes old and damaged blood cells.



What is a splenectomy?

A splenectomy is a surgery to take out all or part of the spleen. There are two types of splenectomy surgeries:

- Partial splenectomy = Part of the spleen is left in.
- Total splenectomy = The whole spleen is taken out.

The doctor will talk with you about which surgery your child should have.

Why does my child need surgery?

- Treatment of disease. For example, the spleen might be removed to improve the number of red blood cells.
- Injury. When the spleen is badly damaged by a traumatic event, such as a car accident the spleen may need to be removed.
- Illness. There are some illnesses that can hurt the spleen.

Is it a problem for my child to have a splenectomy?

Even though the spleen does some things in your child's body, it is not like a heart or lungs. Your child can live quite well without a spleen. Because the spleen does help fight infection, precautions will have to be taken. You need to be more careful that your child is not exposed to infections. You will need to watch your child for infection after the surgery.

What is needed before the surgery?

Your child may need immunizations (vaccine shots) and a flu shot before surgery. These shots help protect against infections. Infections can be serious in a child who does not have a spleen, or has a spleen that is affected by an illness. Your child's doctor will talk about which shots your child will need.

What care will my child need after surgery?

In the hospital, your child will:

1. Get pain medicine to help with pain.
2. Be taught to take deep breaths, cough and sit in a chair. Your child will also be helped to walk soon after surgery. These activities help your child's lungs expand.

After surgery (continued)

Your child will:

3. Have a Foley catheter (tube), if needed, to empty the bladder. The tube is put in your child's bladder during surgery.
4. Not be able to eat or drink right away after surgery. An IV will give your child fluids. Your child will slowly be offered clear liquids. When your child does well with clear liquids, they will be able to eat regular food.
 - a. Some children need a nasogastric (NG) tube to empty the stomach after surgery. An NG tube goes in the nose and into the stomach.
 - b. The NG tube will be removed a day or two after surgery. After the tube is removed, your child will be able to drink clear liquids such as juice, a Popsicle® and broth.

What care will my child need at home?

- Food: Your child may eat their normal diet.
- Bathing: Your child may take a bath or shower.
- Medicine: Follow the directions you are given.
 - Give your child medicine for pain or discomfort as needed.
 - Give your child the antibiotic as prescribed.
- Activities: Limit for 1 to 2 weeks after surgery. After that time, your child may slowly return to all activities.
- Follow up: Take your child to see the doctor who did the surgery as you are told to do after surgery. This appointment is about 3 to 4 weeks after surgery.

What other care will my child need?

You must take care to prevent infection. Watch your child for signs of infection.

- Use medicines as directed. After a splenectomy, your child will need to take antibiotics every day. Your child's doctors will tell you how long to give your child this medicine. This may be for many years.
- Respond to fever. Any time your child has a temperature of 101.5°F (38° C) or higher, they will need to be seen immediately. Your child can be seen by a doctor, in the office or Emergency Room. Do not wait until the next day - Immediate evaluation is needed. Your child's body is no longer protected by the spleen, so some infections can be life threatening.
 - Make sure the doctor who sees your child knows about the spleen surgery.
 - Tests will be done including blood count and blood culture. Your child may also have a chest x-ray, urinalysis and a urine culture.
 - Depending on the results of the evaluation, your child may need antibiotics (different from the antibiotic taken daily) either by mouth or IV (while in the hospital).
- Keep your child up to date on vaccine shots (immunizations).
 - There are some extra shots that your child will need before surgery. There will be vaccine shots needed after surgery. Some will be needed years later.
 - Your child will need a Flu (Influenza) vaccine every year.
 - Talk to your child's primary doctor about vaccines.

Other care (continued)

- Have your child wear medical alert jewelry. Medic Alert® is organization that sells bracelets and necklaces.
 - The medical alert jewelry must say that your child had spleen surgery.
 - The medical alert jewelry helps medical staff who care for your child know about the surgery if you or your child are not able to tell them.
- Follow up appointments:
 - Your child will need to be seen by the surgeon several weeks after the operation.
 - For children with blood illnesses, the hematologist will discuss follow up visits with you.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child:

- Has a temperature over 101.5°F (38° C) degrees.
- Is not able to eat or drink.
- Has an incision that is more red, swollen or if there is drainage.
- Has pain that does not get better with medicine.
- Has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.