

# Post-splenectomy treatment

You have had a splenectomy to remove your spleen due to damage or disease.

## What is the spleen?

The spleen is a small organ that sits underneath your ribs on the left side.

The spleen has several functions. The main function is to help the body fight infections.

## What can happen if I don't have a spleen?

If your spleen is removed (or not functioning properly), you have a higher risk of life-threatening infections. You will have this risk for the rest of your life.

**Although these infections do not happen very often, it's important to take the following precautions to prevent them:**

### 1. Get vaccinated

You will be given vaccinations against some of the bacteria that can cause serious infections. These include vaccinations for pneumococcal disease, meningococcal disease, and for *Haemophilus influenzae type B*. A yearly influenza (flu) vaccination is also recommended.

**Your vaccination schedule is outlined on the second and third pages of this information sheet.**

### 2. Take preventative antibiotics

Antibiotics are often prescribed to be taken daily for the first three years after you have your spleen removed. This is when you are most at risk of infection. Some people may need to take an antibiotic every day for the rest of their life. Your doctor will discuss this with you.

The antibiotic we recommend is **amoxicillin 250mg once each day**, however if you are allergic to penicillin (amoxicillin), then roxithromycin 150mg once each day will be recommended.

### 3. Have emergency antibiotics and know when to use them

As well as the daily preventative antibiotics, you will be provided with an emergency supply of antibiotics to take immediately when required. It is important for you to **know when to take your emergency antibiotics:**

- > You should have 6 amoxicillin capsules (500mg) on hand at all times.
- > If you feel unwell or have an unexplained fever then take all 6 capsules of amoxicillin 500mg together at once **and** see your doctor immediately.
- > If you are allergic to penicillin (amoxicillin), then you should take roxithromycin 300mg at once **and** see your doctor immediately.
- > You should also see a doctor straight away if you get an animal bite that breaks the skin



All antibiotics should be stored at room temperature away from direct sunlight and moisture. You should check the expiry date of all antibiotics regularly.

#### 4. Take good care of yourself

- > **Be careful when travelling.** See your doctor if you are planning on travelling overseas. You may need additional vaccines.
- > **Wear a Medic-Alert® (or similar) bracelet or necklace.** Having a bracelet or necklace that has important information about your condition or a number to call for more information may help healthcare professionals assist you if you are severely injured or unwell. Application forms for a Medic-Alert® bracelet or necklace can be downloaded at <http://www.medicalert.org.au>.
- > **Inform healthcare providers.** Make sure you tell your doctor, dentist and other healthcare professionals that you do not have a spleen.

### YOUR VACCINATION SCHEDULE

**Date of splenectomy:** .....

Insert the date of the surgery when your spleen was removed.

#### First set of vaccines

If your surgery to remove your spleen was planned, you should be vaccinated with the first set of vaccines 2 weeks before the surgery. If you had unplanned emergency surgery to remove your spleen, you will be vaccinated with the first set of vaccines while you are in hospital.

Type of vaccine	Vaccine brand name	Date given
Pneumococcal <i>conjugate</i> vaccine (13vPCV)	Prevenar 13®	
Meningococcal <i>conjugate</i> vaccine (4vMenCV)	Menveo or Nimenrix®	
Meningococcal B <i>recombinant</i> vaccine (4CMenB)	Bexsero®	
Haemophilus influenzae type b <i>conjugate</i> vaccine (Hib)	Hiberix®	

#### Second set of vaccines (follow-up vaccines)

Should be given at **least 2 months** after the first set of vaccines.

Type of vaccine	Vaccine brand name	Date given
Pneumococcal <i>polysaccharide</i> vaccine (23vPPV)	Pneumovax 23®	
Meningococcal <i>conjugate</i> vaccine (4vMenCV)	Menveo® or Nimenrix®	
Meningococcal B <i>recombinant</i> vaccine (4CMenB)	Bexsero®	

**It is very important that you visit your local doctor for the second set (follow-up) vaccines if you are discharged from hospital before they are given to you. You should take this information sheet with you to appointments and record all dates that vaccines were given to you.**

## Re-vaccination (after second set of vaccines)

You will need ongoing vaccines as follows:

Type of vaccine	Vaccine brand name	Instructions	Date(s) given
Influenza vaccine (Flu vaccine)	<b>Multiple</b>	> A yearly flu vaccination is recommended.	
Pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (23vPPV)	<b>Pneumovax 23<sup>®</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; A <b>second dose</b> of Pneumovax 23<sup>®</sup> (23vPPV) should be repeated 5 years after the second set of vaccines above.</li> <li>&gt; A <b>third dose</b> is recommended at the age of 65 years (50 years for Indigenous adults) OR a minimum of 5 years after the second dose, whichever is later.</li> <li>&gt; You can have a maximum of 3 doses of Pneumovax 23<sup>®</sup> (23vPPV) as an adult (&gt; 18 years). If you have your spleen removed after 65 years of age (or ≥ 50 years for Indigenous adults), only a single booster dose is recommended (i.e. the third and final dose is not given).</li> </ul>	
Meningococcal conjugate vaccine (4vMenCV)	<b>Menveo<sup>®</sup> or Nimenrix<sup>®</sup></b>	> <b>Menveo<sup>®</sup> or Nimenrix<sup>®</sup> should be repeated every 5 years</b>	

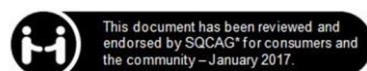
The information contained within this leaflet is for general information only. Ask your doctor if you have any questions about the leaflet or about your medical care.

## For more information

**Infection Control Service**  
**Communicable Disease Control Branch**  
**Telephone: 1300 232 272**  
[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/antimicrobials](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/antimicrobials)

Public-I1-A1

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This document has been reviewed and endorsed by SQCAG\* for consumers and the community – January 2017.

\*SA Health Safety and Quality Community Advisory Group.



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