My Spleen has been removed: What I Need to Know to Protect Myself

What happened and why?

During your hospitalization, you underwent a procedure called a Splenectomy (splee-nek-tuh-mee). This means your spleen was removed. The spleen is a fist-sized organ located in the upper left side of your abdomen (belly).

Your spleen was removed because of either disease or damage. Also, your spleen may still be present but not working correctly.

What does it do?

The spleen helps you:
- fight infection
- get rid of old or damaged red blood cells
- store blood for your body

What can happen now your spleen is gone?

You can live without a spleen, but you may be at a greater risk for certain types of blood infection. The degree of risk depends on your age and if you have other diseases. Although your risk of infection is highest in the first two years after splenectomy, it stays high for the rest of your life. With no spleen, the risk of a severe infection is about the same as dying in a home accident.

To help your body fight these infections in the future, you have been given the following immunizations (shots):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Shot</th>
<th>What infection is Prevented</th>
<th>Date Given</th>
<th>Date 2nd Dose Needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Pneumococcal vaccine conjugate</em></td>
<td>Pneumonia</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Pneumovax)__________</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>(Prevnar 13)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Meningococcal conjugate vaccine</em></td>
<td>Meningitis</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>(Menactra or Menveo - MenACWY)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Hemophilus influenzae Type B conjugate vaccine</em></td>
<td>Pneumonia and Meningitis</td>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However:

The effect of the vaccines in preventing infection varies from person to person. How well the vaccines work depend on the strength of your immune system when the vaccines were given. You will need to be re-immunized (given a second shot) in 8 weeks with Pneumococcal PPSV23 (Pneumovax) and Meningococcal MenACWY (Menactra/Menveo). It is also recommended to receive the pneumonia and meningococcal shots again 5 years from now. Hemophilus influenza vaccine does not need to be repeated.

What should you do when you go home?

Give your doctor a copy of this sheet so that they can help remind you when it is time to be re-immunized.

See a doctor RIGHT AWAY if you have any of the following:

- Fever
- Diarrhea
- Chills
- Achy or weak feeling
- Abdominal (belly) pain
- Cough
- Vomiting
- Skin rash, swelling, redness, or infection

These are signs that you may have an infection. Without your spleen, a small or minor infection may become very serious. Because of this, your doctor will need to see you and maybe start antibiotics to help your body fight the infection.

Because of the risk of infection, you will need to check with your doctor or dentist before having any procedures. Your doctor or dentist may want to give you antibiotics beforehand.

Most Importantly:

All health care professionals should always be told if you have no spleen. You should also wear a MedicAlert bracelet or necklace from the MedicAlert emergency medical information service. You can get one by contacting MedicAlert Foundation International, 2323 Colorado Ave., Turlock, CA 95382. Their toll-free number is 1-800-432-5378. Their Web site address is http://www.medicalert.org

Call your regular/primary care provider if you have any questions about the above information.

This handout does not take the place of a discussion with your doctor. Discuss any questions or concerns you may have with your doctor.