After Your Splenectomy

Information for patients and families

Read this information to learn:

• What a splenectomy is
• How to care for yourself after surgery
• What problems to watch for
• Who to call if you have any questions
What is a splenectomy?
During your splenectomy, your surgeon removed your spleen. Your spleen is a small organ in your abdomen that helps remove old blood cells and fight infection.
What can I eat and drink after my surgery?
You can eat and drink normally after your surgery. We recommend that you eat smaller, more frequent meals until you are able to pass stool (poo).

When can I have a shower or bath?
You can shower 48 hours after your surgery. Use a mild soap to clean your incisions (cuts). Rinse well and pat your incisions dry. Don’t rub.

Do not take a tub bath until your surgeon says it is safe to do so.

How do I take care of my wound?
• You will have a dressing with steri-strips over your incision (cut).
• Keep your incision clean and dry. The steri-strips will fall off in about 5 to 7 days. If they don’t fall off after 7 days, you should remove them.
• Check your incision every day for signs of infection.
• Call your doctor if you have:
  ▪ increased redness, swelling or pain at your wound site
  ▪ pus (yellow or white liquid coming out of your wound)
  ▪ a fever
• Your doctor will remove your staples or stitches during your follow-up appointment or your family doctor will remove them.
What activities can I do?

• Each day after your surgery, your nurse or physiotherapist helped you walk around the unit. Keep walking when you go home. You can walk up and down stairs. Walking helps your blood circulation, bowels and breathing get back to normal.

• You can expect to feel tired and need extra rest during the day for a few weeks after surgery. You should feel a lot better after 2 months.

• Have family members and friends help you while you are in the hospital and also when you get home.

• You will feel some discomfort when you cough or sneeze. Holding a pillow against your stomach will help.

• Don’t lift more than 10 pounds (about 5 kilograms) for 4 to 6 weeks.

• You can be sexually active again when you feel better.

How can I manage my pain?

• It’s important to manage your pain while you heal. Your doctor will give you a prescription for pain medicine before you go home. Follow the instructions for how often you should take it.

• Pain medicine takes time to work. Take your pain medicine before your pain becomes bad. Take it when your pain is at number 4 on the pain scale below.
• Don’t drink alcohol or drive while taking your pain medicines because they can make you sleepy.

• Eat fruits and vegetables and drink lots of water while taking your pain medicine to keep your stool soft.

• You can take your usual prescription medicine again, unless your surgeon has given you different instructions.

• Visit your family doctor in 1 week to make sure you are taking the right medicines.

**When can I drive?**

You can drive 1 week after your surgery. Don’t drive if you are taking pain medicine because it can make you sleepy.

**When can I return to work?**

Talk to your doctor about when you can return to work. When you can go back to work will depend on the kind of work you do.

**What problems should I watch for?**

You may get infections since you no longer have your spleen to help fight them. Your doctor will prescribe you medicines to help prevent you from getting sick. It’s important to tell any doctor or nurse treating you that your spleen has been removed.
Call your doctor or go to the nearest walk-in or urgent care clinic if:

- your incision is red, swollen, bleeding and/or has pus coming out of it
- your pain is bad and doesn’t go away after you take your pain medicine
- you have a fever higher than 38 ºC or 101 ºF and you have chills
- you are short of breath, have chest pain or a bad cough
- you have pain or swelling in your feet, legs or calf area
- you have nausea and vomiting that doesn’t go away
- any swelling in your abdomen increases
- you haven’t had a bowel movement for 3 days

When will I have my follow-up appointment?

You will see your surgeon for a follow-up appointment about 3 to 4 weeks after your surgery. Please call your surgeon’s office when you are discharged from the hospital to book your appointment.

Please bring your health card (OHIP) to all of your hospital visits.

Who can I call if I have any questions?

If you have any questions, please call your nurse navigator:
Phone (Toronto Western Hospital): 416 262 2691
Phone (Toronto General Hospital): 416 262 1992

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