

# Vaccines: Helping Splenectomy Patients **Age 65 & Over** Stay Healthy

## Why do I need vaccines?

- Your spleen is part of your immune system, which helps you fight off disease. Without a spleen, there is a greater risk that an infection will make you very ill.
- Before your spleen is removed, we will give you vaccines to help protect you against bacteria that can pneumonia and “invasive disease”.
- Invasive disease means that bacteria invade parts of your body that are normally free from germs. For example, bacteria that invades your spinal fluid or the tissues covering the brain or spinal cord (meningitis), or your bloods (bacteremia), or your skin (cellulitis). Invasive disease is usually severe, requires treatment in a hospital, and can sometimes cause death.

**Pevnar 13® and Pneumovax®23:** Protection against **pneumococcal pneumonia and invasive disease** caused by *Streptococcus pneumoniae*

- If you have not received Pevnar 13 in the past, or are unsure, you will receive a single dose.
- If you have received a dose of Pevnar 13, you do not need a repeat dose.
- At least 8 weeks after receiving Pevnar 13, you should receive a single dose of Pneumovax23.
- If you had a dose of Pneumovax23 before you turned 65, and it has been less than 5 years since you had the vaccine, wait to receive the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose of Pneumovax23 until at least 5 years have passed.
- These recommendations may change for some individuals depending on their vaccine history.

**Menactra® and Bexsero®:** Protection against **meningococcal and invasive disease** caused by *Neisseria meningitidis*

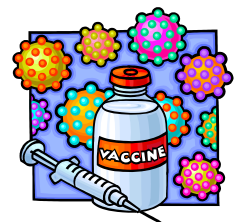
- Initially get both vaccines.
- Menactra: 2 doses total. 2<sup>nd</sup> dose given 8 weeks after 1<sup>st</sup> dose. You may get a booster dose every 5 years thereafter. Discuss your ongoing risks and needs with your primary healthcare provider.
- Bexsero: 2 doses total. 2<sup>nd</sup> dose given 4 weeks after 1<sup>st</sup> dose.

**ActHIB® and Hiberix™:** Protection against **pneumonia and invasive disease** caused by the Hib bacteria

- Only given if you have never gotten this vaccine before.

**Tdap vaccine:** Protection against **tetanus, diphtheria, and whooping cough (acellular pertussis)**

- Receive 1 dose when over age 65.
- Women need 1 dose during each pregnancy.
- Once you have had the Tdap vaccine, you will need a booster shot of just Td (tetanus & diphtheria) every 10 years.



## Protection against flu (seasonal)

- Every fall or winter, you need a dose of the influenza vaccine

## What else should I know?

- You will have a CBC (Complete Blood Count) blood test done before each vaccination.
- Your first set of vaccinations will be done about 2 weeks before your splenectomy operation.
- Your doctor may draw blood to do a titer test. This test looks for antibodies against the bacteria, which shows the vaccines were effective.
- BMT patients should follow their physician's recommendations on when to be vaccinated.

## Are there risks in getting these vaccines?

Like any medicine, vaccines carry a chance of side effects, though serious side effects are very rare. Side effects tend to be mild and go away on their own. Most people who get these vaccines do not have any problems with them.

## What should I watch for?

- Redness, warmth, or swelling where you got the injection. Severe joint pain or difficulties moving the limb are rare.
- Mild fever.
- Brief fainting spells can happen after any medical procedure. Sitting or lying down for about 15 minutes can help prevent fainting and injuries that could be caused by a fall. Tell your nurse if you are dizzy, have changes in your vision, or have ringing in your ears.
- Severe allergic reactions from a vaccine are very rare. The reaction would usually start a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination. Watch for hives (bumps or welts on your skin), swelling of the face or throat, difficulty breathing, a fast heartbeat, dizziness, or weakness.

## What should I do if I have any of these symptoms?

If you are having a severe allergic reaction or other emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency department. For all other symptoms, call the GI Surgery Center at **716-845-4010**. The GI Center is open Monday - Friday, 8 am to 5 pm but your call will be answered by the triage nurse if the Center is closed.

## More information about the vaccines

- Prevnar 13® is a conjugate pneumococcal vaccine, also called PCV13.
- Pneumovax®23 is a pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine, also called PPSV23.
- Menactra® is a meningococcal conjugate vaccine for serogroups A, C, W, and Y, also called MenACWY-D.
- Bexsero® is a meningococcal vaccine for serogroup B, also called MenB.
- ActHIB® and Hiberix™ are *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) vaccines.