

Vaccines: Helping Splenectomy Patients **Under 65** 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*

- These 2 vaccines must be given at least 8 weeks apart, with Pevnar-13 given first.
- At least 8 weeks after receiving Pevnar-13, you should receive your first dose of Pneumovax23.
- Depending on your age, you will need a total of 2 or 3 doses of Pneumovax23. Five years after your first Pneumovax23 dose, you should get a 2nd dose. If you are age 65 or older with this 2nd dose, you have completed your Pneumovax23 series. If you are still under age 65 at the 2nd dose, you will need a 3rd dose when you are over age 65 (with at least 5 years between the 2nd and 3rd dose).
- 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. 2nd dose given 8 weeks after 1st 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. 2nd dose given 4 weeks after 1st 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 (or don't remember if you have received a dose).

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

- If you've never had the vaccine: you need (at least) 1 dose of Tdap in your lifetime.
- Women need 1 dose of Tdap during each pregnancy.



- Once you have had the Tdap vaccine, you will need a booster shot of just Td (tetanus & diphtheria) or Tdap 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.

