



KK Women's and
Children's Hospital
SingHealth

Asplenia in Children

Useful telephone number

Appointments / Specialist 6294-4050
Outpatient Clinics
Enquiries Hotline



KK Women's and
Children's Hospital
SingHealth

100 Bukit Timah Road
Singapore 229899
Tel: +65 6-CALL KKH (+65 6-2255 554)
Fax: +65 6293-7933
Website: www.kkh.com.sg
 www.facebook.com/kkh.sg

Reg No 198904227G PHAEstc1113

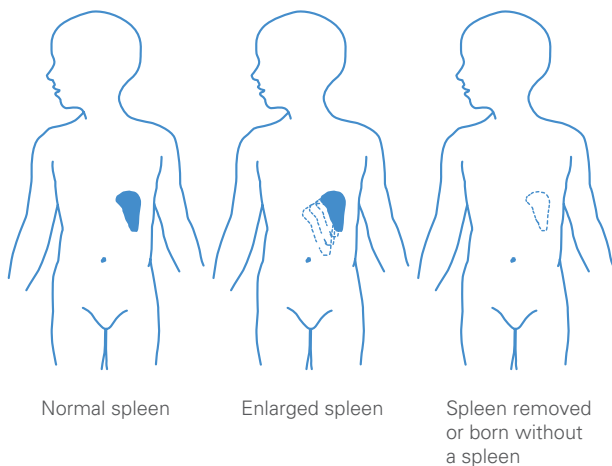
PATIENTS. AT THE HEART OF ALL WE DO.

What is a spleen?

The spleen is an organ which is located in the upper left side of the abdomen. It helps the body to fight against certain bacterial infections.

Asplenia (without a spleen) may be congenital (born without a spleen) or because of splenectomy.

Splenectomy (removal of spleen) is done for many different reasons. Examples include trauma to the spleen, enlarged spleen as a result of certain medical conditions (such as Thalassaemia, Hereditary Spherocytosis). The enlarged spleen can cause problems such as discomfort, rupture, or pooling and destruction of blood cells in the enlarged spleen (known as 'hypersplenism').



What are the risks of asplenia?

The spleen makes up a part of the immune system in our body.

Without a spleen, your child (especially if below 2 years of age) may have an increased risk of developing some serious infections. One of the complications is called overwhelming post-splenectomy infection (OPSI). Even though the risk is small and OPSI is uncommon, it can be very serious, rapidly progressive and even life-threatening if it occurs.

Without a spleen, your child is at risk for severe infections, primarily from bacteria such as pneumococcus (*Streptococcus pneumoniae*), *Haemophilus influenzae* Type B, and meningococcus (*Neisseria meningitidis*).

Prevention of infection in asplenia

When your child has undergone splenectomy or if he/ she is functionally asplenic, you will need to seek prompt medical attention if your child has a fever, especially if associated with shivering or shaking and feels dizzy or faint.

You should inform your doctor that your child has undergone splenectomy or if he/ she is functionally asplenic.

What can be done to reduce the risk of infection in asplenia?

Most infections can be avoided through these measures:

Immunisation

- Immunisation with pneumococcal, meningococcal, and *Haemophilus influenzae* Type B vaccines.
- If your child is scheduled to undergo elective splenectomy, pneumococcal, meningococcal, and *Haemophilus influenzae* Type B vaccines should be administered at least 14 days before surgery. If it is not possible to administer these vaccines before splenectomy, they can be given after the 14th post-operative day. Your child should also receive the pneumococcal, meningococcal, and *Haemophilus influenzae* Type B vaccines if he/ she is functionally asplenic.
- It is also recommended to have the influenza vaccination once a year.

Antibiotic Prophylaxis (prevention)

- If your child has undergone splenectomy or is functionally asplenic, your doctor would prescribe an antibiotic for prevention of infection to be taken daily (eg. oral penicillin V or amoxicillin). The exact duration of antibiotic prophylaxis would be determined by your doctor.