Information for Patients Post-Splenectomy or with Functional Asplenism

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Functional Sub group:
- Clinical/ Patient Services - Surgical
- Clinical/ Patient Services - Medical Treatment
- Clinical/ Patient Services - Critical care
- Population Health - Communicable Diseases

Summary: Patient advice is available for patients diagnosed with functional hyposplenism or who have had their spleens removed.

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Applies to:
- Local Health Districts, Board Governed Statutory Health Corporations,
- Specialty Network Governed Statutory Health Corporations, Affiliated Health Organisations, Private Hospitals and Day Procedure Centres,
- Public Health Units, Public Hospitals

Audience: Clinical, Nursing, Emergency Departments, Surgical, Medical

Distributed to:
- Public Health System, Divisions of General Practice, NSW Ambulance Service, Ministry of Health, Private Hospitals and Day Procedure Centres

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INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS POST-SPLENECTOMY OR WITH FUNCTIONAL ASPLENISM

PURPOSE
To promote a fact sheet and patient advice card to help with care of patients pre and post-splenectomy or if a patient is diagnosed with functional hyposplenism secondary to diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis or amyloidosis.

KEY INFORMATION
Patients who do not have a functioning spleen have a significantly increased risk of rapidly progressive overwhelming infection, despite vaccination or antibiotic prophylaxis. Patients should be counselled regarding these risks and given appropriate information. Antibiotic prophylaxis may be daily and life-long.

Asplenic/hyposplenic patients undergoing surgical or dental procedures will potentially require additional appropriate antibiotic prophylaxis.

Asplenic/hyposplenic patients presenting with a febrile illness must have significant bacterial infection excluded and careful attention paid to the potential for rapid deterioration, despite antibiotic prophylaxis or vaccination history.

A fact sheet has been developed for patients and their carers explaining these risks and a patient advice card that can be printed out, completed by the treating clinician and carried by the patient. This card should be recommended to all patients and the importance of carrying the card at all times emphasised.

Individuals should also consider wearing a Medic-Alert ® or similar bracelet or necklace.

Additional information regarding immunisation recommendations can be found in the Australian Immunisation Handbook.

Information regarding appropriate antibiotic prophylaxis can be sourced from local infectious diseases physicians and found in the e-Therapeutic Guidelines – Antibiotic.

Travel counselling should specifically consider the increased risks to patients who are asplenic/hyposplenic.

ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS
1. Patient Fact Sheet - Care after the removal of the spleen (splenectomy) or if your spleen doesn't work properly (functional hyposplenism)

2. Patient Advice Card - Spleen Removal Patient Card –