

# Spleen Injury: What You Need To Know

## Your Spleen

Your spleen is an organ in your abdomen, located under the left ribs just behind the stomach. It is responsible for filtering and storing your blood, and helping your body to fight infection.

## Spleen Injury

A spleen injury happens when a sudden trauma to the abdomen causes damage to the spleen. Fractures of the left ribs may also injure the spleen.

Spleen injuries can happen from automobile accidents, sports accidents, falls and acts of violence.

## Symptoms

Depending on the severity of the injury, you may have one or more of the following symptoms:

- pain or tenderness in:
  - the upper-left side of your abdomen
  - your chest
  - your left shoulder
  - your back
- bruising in the upper-left side of your abdomen
- nausea (upset stomach) or vomiting (throwing up)
- trouble breathing

- fatigue (feeling extremely tired)
- fainting
- weakness.

## Treatment of Spleen Injuries

You will be admitted to the hospital. The treatment of your spleen injury will depend on how severe it is.

- If your condition is stable, you will continue to be monitored in the hospital until your injury has time to heal.
- If your blood pressure or blood count is too low, you may need to have surgery.
  - In some cases, your doctor may use a catheter (flexible tubes) to stop the bleeding from inside the blood vessel. He or she will tell you if this is an option.
- Depending on how severe your injury is, you may need to stay in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). You will be monitored closely as your spleen heals. If your injury does not heal or gets worse, you may need to have surgery.

After being treated for a spleen injury, it is important that you do not:

- lift anything heavier than 10 pounds for 6 weeks
- do activities that are physically demanding such as playing sports
- return to school or work until your doctor says it's OK.

*(over)*

## When to Call for Help

Call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency department if you have any of the following symptoms:

- dizziness
- rapid heartbeat
- increased weakness or fatigue
- loss of appetite
- blood in your urine or stool
- new or increased pain or tenderness in your abdomen
- nausea (upset stomach) or vomiting (throwing up)
- pale skin.

## If You Had a Splenectomy

If you had a splenectomy, you should get the following immunizations (shots):

- tetanus (and again every 10 years)
- pneumonia (and again every 5 years)
- meningitis
- influenza (and again every year).