

## Travellers with no spleen



If you have had your spleen removed (asplenic) or have a spleen that doesn't function properly (hyposplenic) you may be at increased risk of certain bacterial infections, the risk of acquiring infection can be increased by travel.

### Before you go:

Make sure that you plan well in advance of any trip abroad, book an appointment with your doctor or practice nurse, at least 6-8 weeks before your trip, for a pre travel health risk assessment to discuss your specific needs.

### Vaccination:

Make sure that you have received all of your routine childhood immunisations (talk to your doctor or nurse if you are uncertain). All individuals who are asplenic or who have a condition that affects the function of their spleen should also receive the following vaccinations to help prevent infections to which they are particularly vulnerable:

- Pneumococcal
- *Haemophilus influenzae* type B (Hib) and meningococcal C (Hib/MenC)
- Meningococcal ACWY (Men ACWY) conjugate vaccine
- Influenza vaccine (every year)

Check with your doctor that you are up to date with these routine vaccinations. Talk to your healthcare provider for further advice.

### Insurance:

Ensure that you obtain comprehensive travel insurance which will cover repatriation if necessary. Let the insurance company know that you are asplenic at the time you obtain the policy. A European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) entitles you to free or reduced rate medical care in most EU countries. You can apply for one online ([www.dh.gov.uk/](http://www.dh.gov.uk/)), by phone (0845 606 2030) or by post using a form and pre-addressed envelope from the Post Office.

NB: The EHIC is not a substitute for adequate holiday insurance

### Medication:

If you take antibiotics daily, ensure you have sufficient quantities to cover you throughout the trip with an extra supply in case of delays. If you are not taking antibiotics on a daily basis it may be wise to carry a course with you when travelling abroad. Always keep any medication in the correctly labelled container and carry it with you in your hand luggage. A letter from your doctor may also be useful. Check with your doctor before travelling that the antibiotic you are taking is appropriate to your destination as antibiotic resistance varies around the globe.

Contact a doctor immediately for advice if you are unwell most illnesses will be minor but sometimes may lead to something more serious. Intravenous antibiotics are required to treat bacterial infections in asplenic patients. You may wish to take a sterile medical equipment pack with you, particularly if travelling to areas with poor medical facilities.

### **Malaria:**

Asplenic travellers are at increased risk of severe malarial disease. You should avoid high risk areas if possible. Take meticulous care over taking antimalarial drugs and avoiding mosquito bites. Seek medical attention if you develop a high temperature while in a malarious area.

### **Insect Bites:**

Animal, tick and insect bites may become infected. Seek medical assistance after any such bite as you may require antibiotic treatment. If you are regularly involved in outdoor pursuits like trekking and camping you may be at risk from a rare disease transmitted by ticks called babesiosis which can sometimes be mistaken for malaria. To help protect yourself, use sensible precautions against insect bites, mosquitoes commonly bite between dusk and dawn, wear long sleeved clothing, long trousers and socks when going out at night and apply an effective insect repellent at all times, evidence suggests that N.N-diethylmetatolamide (DEET) based products are the most effective.

Further information on avoiding insect bites can be found on the NaTHNaC website. [http://www.nathnac.org/travel/misc/travellers\\_mos.htm](http://www.nathnac.org/travel/misc/travellers_mos.htm)

### **Medical Alert Bracelet:**

You should carry a card or bracelet (e.g. Medic-Alert ID bracelet) which will alert medical staff if you become ill to the fact that you have no spleen and are at risk of overwhelming infection.

An information leaflet and medical alert card for patients who have had their spleen removed is available to download from the Department of Health website:

[http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_4113581](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4113581)

**This leaflet has been prepared by Sanofi Pasteur MSD to provide general information relating to healthy travel. It is not meant as an alternative to individual advice and should be used in conjunction with advice provided for you by a health care professional.**

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