Whether you have had your spleen removed (splenectomy) or have one that doesn’t work (hyposplenism) this newsletter is for you. Our main aim is to remind you to get booster doses of vaccines. In addition it provides information and updates for yourself and your treating medical team.

This service supports people who live in Victoria, Tasmania and Queensland. We provide: education and an education kit, individualised vaccine reports and reminders on how to reduce infections. We wish to acknowledge the Victoria, Tasmania and Queensland Health Departments for our funding and support from Alfred Health and Monash Health.

We now have just under 8,000 people registered with us, this includes 20 children under the age of 5 years and the average age of people is 45 years.

ANNUAL INFLUENZA VACCINATION DUE!
You are not at an increased risk of influenza (‘flu’) however you require this vaccine in order to reduce your chances of getting the ‘flu’. If you get the ‘flu’ your risk of getting a secondary bacterial infection increases.

This year, the Australian Government has funded TWO types of flu vaccines

1. For people aged over 65 years of age — “trivalent”
   The trivalent or called “enhanced” vaccine is for this age group. It has been shown to better stimulate the immune system of people in this age group to make protective antibodies.

2. For people aged under 65 years of age — “quadrivalent”
   The majority of patients on our database are under the age of 65 and this is the vaccine you will get.

   This year ONLY one dose of either vaccine is required unless your doctor states otherwise.

Staying healthy—YOUR CHECK LIST

- Annual review with GP
- Received your spleen vaccines (pneumococcal and meningococcal) as required including “flu shot”
- Taking antibiotics as prescribed
- Emergency supply of antibiotics at hand
- Spleen alert card in wallet/purse
- Downloaded the Spleen App (Apple devices only)
CHANGES TO MEDICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Please go to our website for the latest medical recommendations - these are updated every year when necessary - the latest one is dated JUNE 2018

Check you have had a pneumococcal conjugate (Prevenar 13), a pneumococcal polysaccharide (Pneumovax 23), meningococcal vaccines: ACWY conjugate (Menveo or Menactra or Nimenrix) and B (Bexsero or Trumenba). Call your GP or us if unsure?

MENINGOCOCCAL “W” ON THE INCREASE

In Australia, there are 5 types or serotypes of meningococcal bacteria that cause disease in humans. These are A, B C, W and Y. A sixth serogroup, Men X, is rarely seen in Australia. Fortunately, meningococcal infections remain uncommon, with 383 cases reported across Australia in 2017. The majority of people who get meningococcal disease will recover but sadly 20% are left with permanent disabilities such as impaired sight and hearing, kidney failure and amputation of limbs and up to 10% will die. While everyone in the community is at risk of meningococcal disease, risks are greater for people with impaired immunity – including people without a functioning spleen. This is why we recommend the meningococcal

People who have had a splenectomy for Hereditary Spherocytosis

What is hereditary spherocytosis (HS)? Red blood cells are normally flat shaped discs but in people with HS they are spherical. The spherical red blood cells are fragile and break down, often leading to anaemia. Symptoms might include fatigue, breathlessness, jaundice and palpitations and some people might require blood transfusions. Sometimes jaundice persists leading to gall stone development. This is why a splenectomy might be recommended.

Do you have a family member who has had a splenectomy and they are NOT registered with us? We are keen to make sure all family members after splenectomy are getting the best medical care plus receive an education session and have our education kit.

Animal Bites or Scratches - Capnocytophaga is a bacterium that can live in the mouths and around the claws of animals eg. dogs and cats. It is harmless to them. In some very rare instances this bug can spread to humans through accidental bites or scratches and cause illness. Most people who have contact with dogs or cats do not become sick. We know that people without a functioning spleen are at a greater risk of becoming unwell if bitten or scratched.

Signs of an infected wound include: blisters around the bite/scratch within hours of injury, redness, swelling, pus, or pain at the site. General signs of a bacterial infection eg. fever, diarrhoea, tummy cramps, etc as described on back page of this newsletter. So after being bitten we recommend that you wash the wound immediately with an antiseptic (if available) or soap and if concerned show the bite/scratch to a GP. Antibiotics might be required to treat the infection. Rest assured these are very rare infections and we definitely want you to have pets as they bring so much happiness into our lives.
Monash Health Spleen Patient Study continues – Improving Care After Splenectomy

In 2017, Sarah Luu, a medical student, and A/Prof Ian Woolley, Deputy Director Monash Infectious Diseases, recruited patients who had a splenectomy for a study assessing long-term outcomes. They found that some patients after splenectomy for trauma might possibly have some ongoing spleen function however they are not sure how good this function is. The study also showed that most patients have received some vaccines but not all the ones we recommend – especially the newest vaccine, meningococcal B vaccine. We also recommend that patients take antibiotics (as prescribed). The vaccines we recommend are 2 types of pneumococcal, 2 types of meningococcal, one *Haemophilus influenzae* (Hib) and the annual “flu shot”. We know that some vaccines are expensive and that your GP may not know the latest recommendations – get our recommendations on link [https://spleen.org.au/VSR/information.html](https://spleen.org.au/VSR/information.html)

Sarah and Ian’s study also showed that platelets (blood cells that help with clotting), of patients were more “sticky” and very different to people with spleens. This study is continuing and Sarah and Ian wish to recruit more adult patients who have had a splenectomy especially for trauma prior to May 2017. If you are interested in helping, you will need to go to Monash Medical Centre, in Clayton, for one or possibly two visits. You will have a blood test and receive any spleen vaccines that you haven’t had. There is a fee for the vaccines at Monash Medical Centre (MMC) but they are cheaper than receiving them via your GP. Participants will be reimbursed for parking fees. If you have any questions or you would like to participate, contact Sarah at sarah.luu@monash.edu or call ID Unit at MMC at 9594 4564.

GOOD NEWS—for Victorians!

**Monash Immunisation**, an all-age service based at Monash Medical Centre (MMC) in Clayton, is able to give you the recommended “spleen vaccines”. Patients who attend MMC will receive some vaccines for free and others will incur a small fee of $39.00 per vaccine or pension/health card $6.00 per item. You will need a referral from your GP if you need to see the adult or paediatric doctors. **Fax** your referral to 03 9594 6325 or **Email** referral to immunisation@monashhealth.org or **Call** 9594 6320.


- Queensland - we are working with Queensland Health to see how we can help you, stay tuned.
- Tasmania - you can access cheaper vaccines via your GP and teaching hospitals

**Spleen Australia’s vaccine record/SPLEEN APP**

Do you have an Apple device (iPhone or iPad)?

If YES have you downloaded your App yet? Call/email us for more information!

Sadly this App is only available for people with Apple devices. We are working to secure funding for all devices! This is why we must get feedback on the App.

**PLEASE RATE THE APP**

(bottom right corner of screen in My Vaccination Schedule page)

**NOTE** The App will not work until you contact us to activate it.
Best wishes from us and hoping you have a healthy 2018!
Spleen Australia Team

Detecting signs of a bacterial infection -
if you have any of these symptoms please see a doctor and let them know you do not have a spleen or have one that doesn’t work.

- Diarrhoea
- Vomiting
- Fever
- Can’t Get Warm
- Exhaustion
- Confusion
- Headaches

**People without a functioning spleen can get very sick, very quickly if they ignore these symptoms**

FEEDBACK
Do you have any suggestions for our service? Is our website easy to navigate? Does our education kit meet your needs? We welcome your thoughts - email or call us

NEW: SPLEEN AUSTRALIA SONG AND VIDEO CLIP—
check website after July 2018!

DONATIONS  Spleen Australia needs your support. If you can help, please go to Alfred Hospital Foundation website  https://www.alfredfoundation.org.au/donate-now/ and go to SPLEEN AUSTRALIA link in “donation details”. You can also call The Alfred Foundation staff on (03) 9076 3222 to donate. Your donations are tax deductible. Thank you very much in advance!

How many people are registered?

7,748 people

How many people have had a splenectomy?

6924

Why have they had a splenectomy?

- Trauma  2223
- Blood diseases  1674
- Blood cancers  554
- Cancer  789
- Not planned  652
- Other reason  1032 eg cysts

How many people with a non functioning spleen? 387

How many people have had a splenic artery embolisation procedure? 437