



Spleen Australia

## Information for people living without a functioning spleen

### Spleen Australia

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Website: [spleen.org.au](http://spleen.org.au)

We recommend that you seek information only from credible websites such as:

Australian Government  
[health.gov.au](http://health.gov.au)

Victorian Department of Health and Human Services  
[www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus](http://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus)

Tasmanian Department of Health  
[dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/communicable\\_diseases\\_prevention\\_unit/infectious\\_diseases/coronavirus](http://dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/communicable_diseases_prevention_unit/infectious_diseases/coronavirus)

Queensland Health  
[qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19](http://qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19)

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26 March 2020

Information regarding Coronavirus infection (COVID-19) is updated regularly, as the situation changes over time.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### Am I at greater risk of getting the coronavirus infection?

As a person who does not have a spleen or has one that doesn't work (**a person without a functioning spleen**) there is currently no evidence that you have an increased risk of respiratory viral infections. It is likely that your risk of getting this infection is the same as for the general population. Bacterial infections cause you the most trouble. However, people without a functioning spleen who have a COVID-19 infection may experience complications; especially those aged over 60 years, and have other chronic health conditions eg lung disease, heart disease and diabetes.

#### What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms include fever, coughing, sore throat, fatigue, and shortness of breath.

#### What precautions should I take for my personal protection?

There are personal hygiene measures you can take up to reduce the risk of getting infections, including COVID-19. Good handwashing technique using soap and water is essential. Avoid touching your face and practice sneezing and coughing into your elbow. The use of masks in the community is not recommended in general as the hygiene measures described above are known to be the most effective ways to reducing the spread of infection.

#### Should I have the flu and pneumococcal vaccinations?

Spleen Australia recommends

- (i) Annual influenza vaccination for everyone when it becomes available (April 2020).
- (ii) Pneumococcal vaccination – there are two types of pneumococcal vaccines that are recommended for you. Please check with your GP to see if you are up to date with these vaccines and also check the if you have received the recommended meningococcal and Hib vaccines.

#### Should I have a contingency plan if I got sick either with COVID-19 or a bacterial infection?

In the case of widespread disruptions to medical supplies or illness, it might be necessary to have an increased supply of your daily antibiotics (if prescribed) in advance. You must also check the expiry date on your supply of emergency antibiotics. You can self-administer this supply should you become very unwell and unable to get your GP or local emergency department in a prompt manner. Always show your spleen alert card when you see a doctor.

#### Who should I contact if I have symptoms?

Contact your GP if you have any symptoms or you are concerned. If you have serious symptoms such as difficulty breathing, call 000 for urgent medical help.