

Patient Information

Major Trauma Service

Abdominal Injury: Liver and Spleen A Patient's Guide

Why have I been given this leaflet?

This leaflet is for those who have suffered abdominal trauma. Its aim is to advise on the management of your injury when you are discharged from hospital. The abdomen (mid-section of the body) can be injured by many types of trauma. Trauma can be caused by; a direct blow (e.g. kick), impact with an object (e.g. fall onto bicycle handlebars) or sudden deceleration (e.g. fall from a height or a vehicle crash). The severity of abdominal injuries varies depending on how the injury happened. The spleen and liver can be damaged by abdominal trauma.

What is the spleen?

The spleen is a solid organ in your body that helps to fight infection and cleans your blood. It has many blood vessels and can easily start bleeding after trauma to the abdomen. Patients with no spleen are at risk of severe life threatening infections unless they take antibiotics daily.

What is the liver?

The liver is the largest solid organ in the body. It cleans your blood, makes bile (a liquid which breaks down what you eat) and stores energy for your body to use. The liver has many blood vessels and can easily start bleeding after trauma to the abdomen

On leaving hospital

You will be discharged from hospital when the team feel it is safe for you to move around and when your pain can be managed at home. However, you may also have other injuries that impact on your healing and length of stay in hospital. The team looking after you will explain and discuss this with you as necessary.



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Bleeding from the liver or spleen is rare after the first five days; however occasionally late bleeding may occur. You will need to rest and avoid strenuous activities. **You should avoid contact sports or activities where a fall is likely for six months after your injury.** You may be given specific advice regarding activity restrictions before discharge but there is some general advice in regards to your abdominal injury:

DO the following activities:

- **Do** low-impact exercise, walk and resume normal daily activities (you may resume sexual activity when you feel ready). Be careful not to overdo these activities.
- **Do** keep your outpatient appointment with your surgical team.
- **Do** return to work when your doctor/surgeon says it is okay.
- **Do** follow the surgical team's advice for follow up. If antibiotics and vaccines are prescribed after a spleen injury, it is very important that you attend the appointment to receive these.

DON'T do the following activities:

- **Don't** do any heavy lifting, i.e. no more than 5kg.
- **Don't** push or pull anything heavy. For example, don't vacuum or mow the lawn.
- **Don't** do activities that could cause injury, such as contact sports or high-impact exercise. For example, avoid: football, rugby, sports that require a helmet, hiking, biking, or running, horseback riding, motocross, skiing, ice skating, aerobics, crunches, or sit-ups.

With abdominal trauma there can be a risk of delayed bleeding or infection.

Symptoms to look for are:

- Feeling lightheaded or dizzy
- Increased pain in your abdomen
- Increasing difficulty in breathing
- Swelling in your abdomen, or feeling overly full
- High Temperature
- Nausea or vomiting that does not get better

If you have these symptoms and you feel they are getting worse, ideally return to the Emergency Department at UHCW. If that is not possible, go to your nearest Accident and Emergency Department

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The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 76 96 6051 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy

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Department	Major Trauma Service
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