

DUNBARTON APPROVES SOLAR ARRAY

The town approved Warrant Article 17 at the Town Meeting held on March 11, 2025, to allocate \$31,592 for the purchase of the solar array at the transfer station. This purchase, which will be executed in February 2026, will save \$815/month in lease payments and also allow Dunbarton to enroll in the sale of RECs (Renewable Energy Credits) that will pay the town for renewable energy credits sold. This REC revenue is separate from the electric energy savings generated from producing power at the transfer station solar array.

DOCTOR'S
CORNER

by Dr. Richard Johnson
Dunbarton

YOUR SPLEEN

The origin of the word ‘spleen’ is at best unclear! It can be used as a noun (internal organ; seat of emotions) or an adjective (sullen, morose). Your spleen as part of the lymphatic system is a remarkable organ. Let’s look at some of its well-known and not so well-known functions. Your spleen rests just above your stomach in the left upper abdomen under the left diaphragm. It is about the size of your fist, although various conditions can cause it to be larger.

It is rare, but you can be born without a spleen (congenital asplenia), leaving you at risk for life-threatening infections. As a baby develops in the womb, the spleen produces hemoglobin (the molecule that carries oxygen to all cells in the body). After birth, the spleen filters blood by removing old or damaged red blood cells (life span about 120 days) and platelets (life span 8-12 days). There are specialized cells in the spleen that can recycle the iron from the hemoglobin of damaged and old red blood cells. The spleen also makes white blood cells and antibodies that help fight infection.

The spleen is wrapped in a fibroelastic capsule which allows it to expand in size. This fibroelastic capsule is not very tough, hence the spleen can be ruptured relatively easily, and repair of the capsule is at best difficult. The substance of the spleen (called pulp) is divided into “white pulp” the main lymphoid tissue of the spleen, and “red pulp”, whose primary function is to destroy the old, defective, and dead red blood cells.

Immune Thrombocytopenia Purpura (ITP) is an autoimmune condition where autoantibodies form a complex on platelets which then get broken down in the spleen leading to a low platelet count. Since platelets are the first to show up to help stop bleeding, their diminished numbers leave a person with a risk of severe bleeds. For those who do not respond to medical treatment, surgical removal of the spleen is an option. The spleen can be “overworked” filtering out abnormal red cells found in spherocytosis and sickle cell disease. Some malignant and benign conditions can infiltrate the spleen. All these conditions can cause the spleen to enlarge (splenomegaly) giving it a higher risk of rupture.

During blunt abdominal trauma the spleen is one of the most frequently injured organs. Depending on the nature and severity of the injury, the first treatment is medical; if that is not successful, surgery (splenectomy) is in order. For the person who will need to have their spleen removed, antibiotic coverage should be given before surgery. If that is not feasible, postoperative antibiotics are given. You can live without your spleen, but you will need antibiotic prophylaxis and influenza vaccinations for the rest of your life.

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