



SPLENIC MASSES

ABOUT THE DISEASE

A **splenic mass** is a localized area of enlargement within the spleen. The spleen is an organ that performs many functions including maintenance and maturation of red blood cells, formation of blood cells during fetal development, and functions in immunity.

Splenic masses generally follow a 2/3rds – 2/3rds Rule. Where roughly 2/3rds of all splenic masses are malignant cancer, and roughly 2/3rds of those malignant cancers are a specific type referred to as hemangiosarcoma.

Types of **splenic masses** include:

- Metastatic neoplasia (cancer)
 - Hemangiosarcoma is the most common, and yields a 2-4 week median life expectancy
- Hematoma – swelling of clotted blood within the spleen
- Benign tumors – overgrowth of cells in the spleen (most commonly hemangioma, hamartoma)
- Infarctions – obstruction of blood within a vessel of the spleen
- Nodular hyperplasia – benign overgrowth of splenic cells (usually incidental finding)
- Abscesses – infection of the spleen leading to an abscess (uncommon)

Clinical signs of a **splenic mass** vary depending on the underlying cause and size of the mass. If signs exist, they may include lethargy, anorexia, weight loss, distended (enlarged) abdomen, internal hemorrhage, collapse, and death.

OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

A thorough clinical history and physical exam are important for the presumptive diagnosis of a **splenic mass**.

Ultrasound is the non-invasive diagnostic of choice for the diagnosis of **splenic masses**.

More invasive testing includes a fine needle aspirate of **splenic masses**, or surgical biopsy after abdominal surgery.

TREATMENT

Treatment for a **splenic mass** will largely be dictated by the findings on physical exam and diagnostic procedures.

In life threatening cases of internal hemorrhage, blood transfusions and emergency surgery are required. In more stable cases, with incidental findings, then elective surgery is can be pursued.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Seek early examination for a patient exhibiting abdominal swelling, and collapse.
- Early diagnosis is critical, especially in cases of malignant neoplasms.