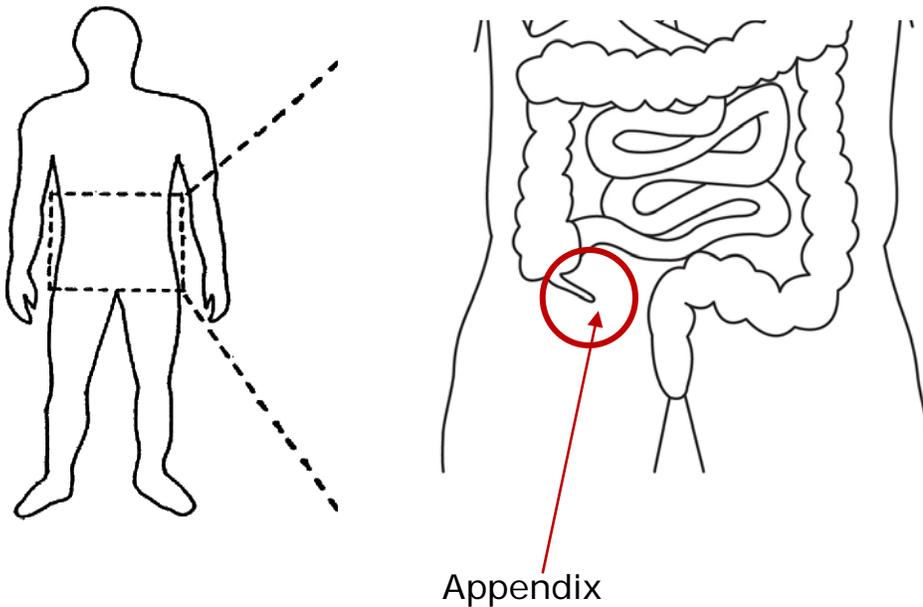


Appendectomy

What is an appendectomy?

An appendectomy is surgery to remove the appendix. The appendix is a small, hollow sack that hangs down from the large intestine (bowel). It has no known purpose in the body.

If the appendix becomes blocked, it can become inflamed or infected. This is called appendicitis. If the appendicitis is severe, the appendix may burst open (rupture) and cause a serious infection.



What is a laparoscopic appendectomy?

Laparoscopic appendectomy is surgery to remove your appendix. It is done by making 3 or 4 small incisions (cuts), 1 cm or less in your abdomen (stomach area).

Reasons for incisions:

- To put gas (CO₂) into your abdomen, so that your appendix can be seen. Then a video camera is put into the incision.
- For other instruments that hold and move the appendix.
- For an instrument that removes the appendix.

This type of surgery takes about 1½ hours.

For a small number of people the appendix cannot be removed this way. Sometimes during the laparoscopic appendectomy, the surgeon decides for safety reasons to remove your appendix by the open method.

What is the open method?

In the open method the appendix is removed through a small incision in your abdomen.

If you have the open method to remove your appendix, your stay in hospital will be about 1 to 2 days. Your recovery period will be about 4 to 6 weeks.

What happens after surgery?

In the hospital

- After surgery you will go to the Post Anesthetic Care Unit, or PACU, until you are fully awake.
- Then you will go to Same Day Surgery, or SDS, until you are ready to go home. You will go home about 3 to 5 hours after your surgery.
- You will need a ride home and someone to stay with you that night.

If you feel pain or an upset stomach, your nurse will give you medication to help you. The gas from laparoscopic surgery may cause some abdominal or shoulder pain. Walking and taking your pain medication regularly can help relieve these pains. You will be given clear fluids while in the hospital.

At home

- Rest the day of your surgery. Then, gradually resume your normal activities. This can vary depending on your type of work. Talk to your surgeon about this.
- Take the pain medication suggested by your surgeon. Your pain should become less each day.
- Other ways to relieve pain are:
 - drinking warm fluids
 - walking
 - relaxing by listening to music or deep breathing
- You may resume your normal diet at home when you feel like it. Try to drink as much as you can until you are eating again. This will also help prevent constipation.

Incision care

You may shower the day after your surgery. Use a mild soap and pat the incisions dry. Each incision should be a dry closed line. Your incisions may be covered with tape. Try to keep the tape clean and dry. If the tape falls off, you can leave it off. You can have a tub bath after your incisions have healed.

If you have stitches they will either dissolve on their own or you will need to have them removed. When you leave the hospital you will be instructed about your stitches and follow-up appointment.

Call your surgeon if you notice:

- Pain is not relieved by pain medication.
- Any incision is red, swollen or painful.
- Excessive bleeding or drainage from an incision (a small amount is common).
- You have a fever 38°C (100°F) or higher.
- You vomit and continue to feel sick.