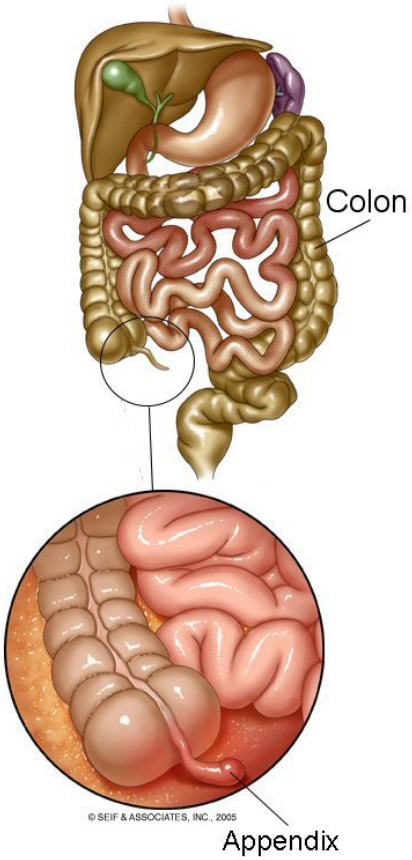
Appendectomy
Care Before and After Surgery

Appendicitis is inflammation of the appendix and is a common cause of belly (*abdominal*) pain. Your caregiver determines the seriousness of the pain by an examination, possibly including blood tests and x-rays. Once a diagnosis of appendicitis is made, the treatment is surgical and requires removal of the appendix.



CAUSES
Appendicitis is often caused by a blockage of the appendix. The most common cause is by waste material (*feces*) from the large bowel (*colon*) blocking the appendix. Many other problems can cause a blockage in the appendix but are less common.

SYMPTOMS
- Anorexia.
- Nausea
- Fever.
- Vomiting.
- Diarrhea.

TREATMENT
Once the diagnosis of appendicitis is made, the procedure is to remove the appendix. This is done either by:
- **Open surgery** - surgeon makes a cut (*incision*) in the right lower abdomen.
- **Laparoscopic surgery** - several small incisions will be made in your abdomen. One of these incisions will be made to insert a laparoscope (like a small telescope) for your surgeon to look through while doing your procedure. Operating instruments used to perform the surgery will be inserted through the other incisions.

These procedures are most often done under a general anesthetic so that you are sleeping during the procedure. Following the procedure, you will be taken to a recovery room. Once you have recovered from the anesthetic you will be returned to your room. Your caregiver will tell you how long you will stay in the hospital. Following the procedure you will be given pain medications to keep you comfortable.

BEFORE SURGERY LET YOUR CAREGIVERS KNOW ABOUT THE FOLLOWING:
- Allergies.
- Medications taken including herbs, eye drops, over the counter medications, and creams.
- Use of steroids (by mouth or creams).
- Previous problems with anesthetics or novocaine.
- Possibility of pregnancy, if this applies.
- History of blood clots (*thrombophlebitis*).
- History of bleeding or blood problems.
- Previous surgery.
- Other health problems.

AFTER YOUR SURGERY
After surgery, you will be taken to the recovery area where a nurse will watch you and check your progress. Once awake, stable, and taking fluids well, without other problems you will be allowed to go home.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS AFTER YOUR SURGERY
- Do not drive while taking narcotics for pain.
- Once home an ice pack applied to the operative site may help with discomfort and keep swelling down.
- Change dressings as directed.

- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- You or your child may continue normal diet and activities as directed.
- There should be no heavy lifting (more than 10 pounds), strenuous activities or contact sports for three weeks, or as directed.
- Keep the wound dry and clean. The wound may be washed gently with soap and water. Gently blot or dab dry following cleansing without rubbing. For ten days, or as instructed by your caregivers, do not:
  - Take baths.
  - Use swimming pools.
  - Use hot tubs.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- There is redness, swelling, or increasing pain in the wound area.
- Pus is coming from the wound.
- An unexplained oral temperature above 101º F (38.3º C) develops.
- You notice a foul smell coming from the wound or dressing.
- A breaking open of the *wound* (edges not staying together) after stitches have been removed.
- There is increasing abdominal pain.
- You have an intolerance to food.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- A rash develops.
- There is difficulty breathing, or development of a reaction or side effects to medications given.

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