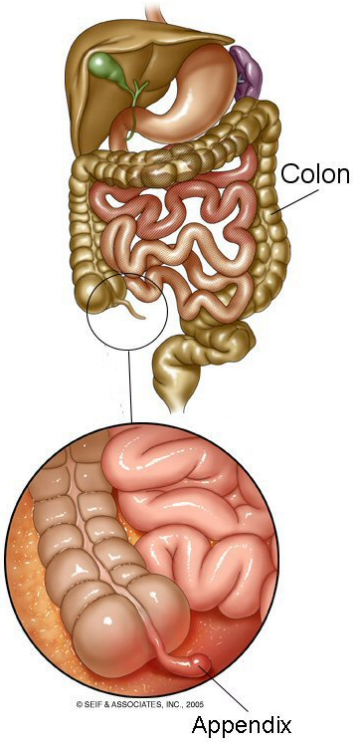
Appendectomy, Laparoscopic

Abdominal pain can be caused by many things. Your caregiver decides the seriousness of your pain by an examination, possibly including:

- Blood tests.
- X-rays.
- CT Scan.



Many cases of abdominal pain can be observed and treated at home. Once a diagnosis of appendicitis is made however, the treatment is surgical and requires removal of the appendix.

CAUSES

Appendicitis is an inflammation of the appendix. It is often caused by a blockage of the appendix caused by material (*feces*) from the large bowel *(colon*). This is the most common cause of appendicitis. Other problems can cause a blockage in the appendix but are less common.

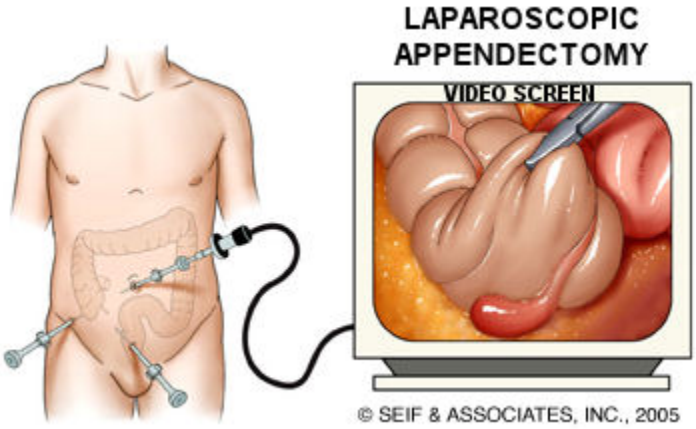
SYMPTOMS

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

Your caregiver has advised you to have a laparoscopic procedure for removal of your appendix.

Laparoscopic surgery is an alternative to open surgery. Laparoscopic surgery offers a shorter recovery time and less discomfort. If laparoscopy is started and your surgeon feels it is not safe to continue on because of various reasons, it will be converted to an open abdominal procedure. Laparoscopic procedures may not be appropriate when:

- There is major scarring from previous surgery
- There are bleeding disorders in the patient
- A pregnancy is near term
- There are other conditions which make the laparoscopic procedure impossible as well.



PROCEDURE

Laparoscopic appendectomy is most often done under a general anesthetic so that the patient is sleeping during the procedure. This will keep you pain free during surgery. When you are asleep *carbon dioxide* (a harmless gas) will be used to inflate your abdomen. This will allow your surgeon to look around inside your abdomen and perform your surgery. Three small cuts by the surgeon *(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. If your surgeon feels it is not safe to continue on with a laparoscopic procedure, he or she will perform an open abdominal surgery in which he makes an incision to enter the abdomen. This gives the surgeon a larger view and field to work in to accomplish procedures that sometimes cannot be done with a laparoscope alone. Open surgery does require a longer recovery time. Both open and laparoscopic procedures are proven operations that cure appendicitis.

Following the procedure, you will be taken to a recovery room. Once recovered from the anesthetic you will be returned to your room. Your caregiver will instruct you as to your length of hospital stay. Following the procedure you will be given pain medications to keep you comfortable.

COMPLICATIONS

Some problems which may occur following this procedure include:

- Infection: A germ starts growing in the wound. This can usually be treated with antibiotics (medications which kill germs).
- Bleeding following surgery can be a complication of almost all surgeries. Your surgeon takes every precaution to keep this from happening.
- Damage to other organs may occur. If damage to other organs or excessive bleeding should occur it may be necessary to change to an open abdominal procedure. Scarring (*adhesions*) from previous surgeries or disease may also be a cause to change this procedure to an open abdominal operation.
- Abscess formation.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS AFTER YOUR SURGERY

- Once you are home an ice pack applied to the operative site may help with discomfort and keep swelling down.
- Change dressings as directed.
- Keep the wounds dry and clean. The wounds may be washed gently with soap and water. Gently blot or dab dry following cleansing without rubbing. Do not take baths, use swimming pools or use hot tubs for ten days, or as instructed by your caregiver.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- You may continue normal diet as directed.
- There should be no heavy lifting (more than 10 pounds) or contact sports for three weeks, or as directed.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- There is redness, swelling, or increasing pain in the wound or wounds.
- There is pus coming from the wounds.
- There is drainage from a wound lasting longer than one day.
- An unexplained oral temperature above 101º F (38.3º C) develops.
- You notice a foul smell coming from the wounds or dressing.
- A breaking open of the *wound* (edges not staying together) after sutures have been removed.
- You notice increasing pain in the shoulders (shoulder strap areas).
- You develop dizzy episodes or fainting while standing.
- You develop persistent nausea or vomiting.
- You are unable to tolerate food or have no bowel movements.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop a rash.
- You have difficulty breathing
- You develop any reaction or side effects to medications given.

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