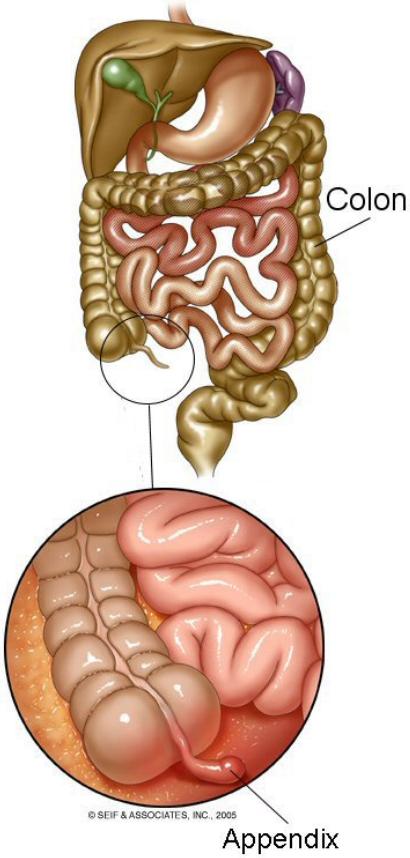
Appendectomy, Adult
Care Before and After Surgery

Appendicitis is an 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.

TREATMENT

Once the diagnosis of appendicitis is made, the procedure is to remove the appendix. This is done surgically by making a cut (*incision*) in the right lower belly. This is 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 including aspirin and latex.
- Medications taken including herbs, eye drops, over the counter medications, and creams.
- Use of steroids (by mouth or creams).
- Previous problems with anesthetics or novocain.
- Previous surgery.
- Possibility of pregnancy, if this applies.
- History of blood clots (*thrombophlebitis*).
- History of bleeding or blood problems.
- 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 you're awake, stable, and taking fluids well, without other problems you'll be returned to your room or allowed to go home.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS AFTER YOUR SURGERY (APPENDECTOMY)

- Once you are home an ice pack applied to the operative site may help with discomfort and keep swelling down. Use ice for ONLY 15-20 minutes at a time, with rest periods of 2-3 hours between uses. Never place the ice pack directly on your skin; use a towel between the ice pack and your skin.
- Change dressings as directed.
- 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.
- 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. Do not take baths, use swimming pools or use hot tubs for ten days, or as instructed by your caregiver.

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.
- The wound edges break open after sutures or staples have been removed.
- You develop increasing abdominal pain.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

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

Document Released: 08/01/2005 Document Re-Released: 10/15/2010
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.