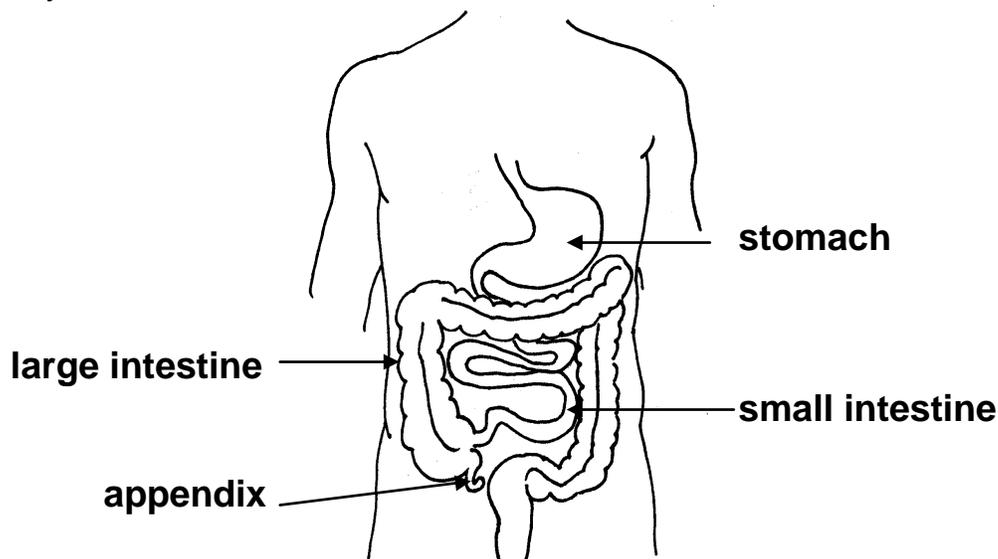

Appendectomy Surgery

What is an appendix?

The appendix is a small, finger-shaped pouch of the intestine. It is found on the lower right side of your abdomen between the small intestine and the large intestine. The appendix has no known function in the body.



What is appendicitis?

Appendicitis is a red, swollen and infected appendix. Most people need surgery to remove the appendix.

Usually the appendix needs to be removed before it becomes so swollen that it breaks open or ruptures and sends the infection all over the inside of the abdomen.

What is an appendectomy?

An appendectomy is surgery done to remove the appendix.

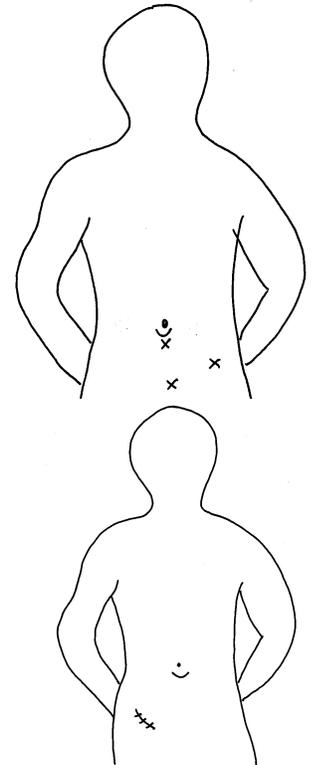
There are 2 ways to do the surgery:

- Laparoscopic method
- Open method

❑ Laparoscopic Method

The doctor makes 3 to 4 very small incisions in the abdomen. Each incision is about 0.5 to 1 centimeter long. One incision is used to put gas and a telescope into the abdomen so the doctor can see the appendix well. Instruments are put into the other incisions to remove the appendix.

The picture shows an example of where the incisions may be. Your incisions may be different than the picture.



❑ Open Method

Some doctors use the open method. The doctor makes an incision about 7 centimetres long to remove the appendix.

Your surgeon will talk to you about the method that is best for you before surgery.

What to Expect After Surgery

How long will I be in the hospital?

You can talk to your doctor about this. Most people should plan to stay 1 to 2 days.

Activity and exercise

You will begin deep breathing, coughing and leg exercises soon after surgery. These help prevent chest and circulation problems. Your nurse will teach you how to do your exercises. You need to do these exercises every hour you are awake.

You should move around and walk as much as you can. Moving and walking help:

- keep your muscles strong
- prevent breathing problems
- help your blood move around your body
- prevent constipation

At home, you can do moderate exercise like walking.

Activity and exercise (continued)

Do not do any heavy lifting for 2 weeks after laparoscopic surgery or 4 to 6 weeks after open surgery. Heavy lifting is lifting more than 4 kilograms or 10 pounds. This is like a full grocery bag, small suitcase or small baby. Talk to your doctor as he or she may want you to follow other guidelines for activities.

You can gradually resume your normal activities. Your doctor will tell you when you can return to work. This depends on the type of work you do.

You can resume sexual activity when advised. Talk to your doctor or health care provider about this during your follow-up appointment.

Medication

Right after surgery, you will get pain control medication through a small tube in your arm called an intravenous or IV. If you had surgery by the laparoscopic method, you may feel some pain in the shoulder caused by the gas. This does not last long. When the IV is removed, you will take medication by mouth to control discomfort when needed.

Some other ways to relieve pain and discomfort are:

- Drinking warm fluids when allowed
- Walking
- Any method of relaxation such as listening to music, meditation, or deep breathing

At home take the pain medication as prescribed. Your pain should become less each day. Call your family doctor or health care provider if your pain does not go away.

You may also take antibiotic medication after surgery. Follow the doctor's orders. Remember to take this medication until the prescription runs out even if you feel well.

Bathing, showering and incision care

You may shower the second day after surgery. If you have stitches or clips, do not use soap in this area until they are removed. Pat this area dry after a shower. If the tape falls off at home, leave it off. The tape should fall off by 7 days after surgery. If it has not fallen off by then, gently remove the tape during your next shower.

If you have stitches or clips, they will be taken out at your follow-up visit with your surgeon. You can take baths after the skin is healed.

Diet

Right after surgery you will get fluids through your IV. When your health care team advises, you will begin to take small sips of water and then other clear fluids. You will move to a full fluid diet, soft food and then your usual diet.

At home, eat a healthy diet. To prevent constipation, eat high fibre food such as fruit, vegetables, whole grain products and bran.

Contact your family doctor or health care provider if you notice:

- any incision is red, swollen or painful
- any bleeding or drainage from an incision
- you have a fever
- you vomit and continue to feel sick

When do I see the surgeon again?

You will be given a follow-up appointment with your surgeon before you leave the hospital.

If you do not have a follow-up appointment, call your surgeon's office to make a follow-up appointment after you get home.