

Greenwich Hospital

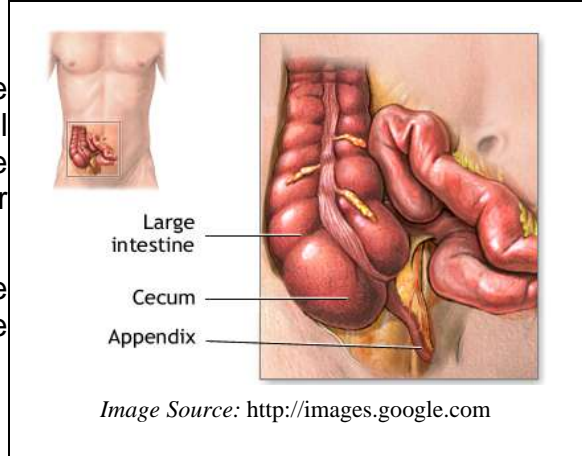
What is an Appendectomy?

PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

What is an Appendectomy?

An appendectomy (ap-pen-dec-toe-me) is the surgical removal of the appendix, a small structure attached to the first part of the large intestine. This is located in the right lower part of the abdomen.

The appendix has no known function in the human body, and removal does not affect the digestive system.



Why is an appendectomy needed?

If the appendix becomes inflamed, this condition is called appendicitis. If treatment is delayed, the appendix will burst, causing infection and other serious problems in the abdomen. Surgical removal is the treatment for appendicitis.

How is the appendectomy performed?

An appendectomy is usually performed as an emergency surgery. There are two ways that your surgeon can perform the procedure:

- **Open Technique:** Your surgeon makes a cut or incision in the right lower portion of the abdomen through the muscle wall and lining of the abdominal cavity. The appendix is then clipped and removed.
- **Laparoscopic Technique:** Your surgeon uses a special thin tube with a camera on it that is inserted into the abdomen through a small incision to see the appendix. Two to three other small incisions are made to insert the surgical instruments. Your abdomen will be filled with a special harmless gas, carbon dioxide, for easier viewing and to provide room for the surgery to be performed. The appendix is then clipped and removed.

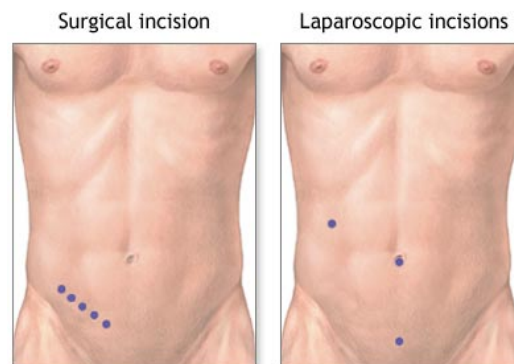


Image Source: <http://images.google.com>

Are there any complications after surgery?

Complications are rare after an appendectomy. If the appendix ruptured prior to the surgery, a serious infection of the abdominal cavity called peritonitis may occur. This is not related to the surgery. This is due to the rupturing of the appendix. Treatment after surgery will also include intravenous and/or oral (pills) antibiotics to control the infection.

Are there symptoms I should report to the doctor?

It is important to report the following symptoms to your surgeon:

- Bleeding at the incision site.
- Persistent nausea and vomiting.
- Infection at the surgical site. Symptoms include:
 - Fever of 100 degrees F or more
 - Increased pain
 - Drainage, redness, swelling at incision site
 - Skin around the incision is warm to touch

Is there special care after the surgery?

If you had your appendectomy through the open technique, expect to be up walking around within six hours. You may stay in the hospital over night depending upon your general health and presence of other medical conditions.

If you had your appendectomy by the laparoscopic technique, you will most likely go home the same day of surgery. You may have shoulder pain after the surgery. This is normal and is caused by the gas used during the procedure. When you get home, it is important to get up and walk around to help get rid of the gas.

For both procedures, the following is important:

- You will usually have abdominal discomfort after the surgery. Your doctor will prescribe pain medicine for you to take. It is important to take this medication as directed so that you are able to get out of bed and care for yourself at home.
- It is very important to get out of bed and walk. This improves the circulation in your legs, aids in getting rid of the abdominal gas, keeps your lungs clear from congestion, and assists in preventing constipation.
- Keep the incision area clean to prevent infection. You may shower, but do not take tub baths until advised by your surgeon.
- Within one to two days after surgery, you may slowly increase your diet from clear liquids (tea, broth, jello, clear juices, water) to your usual diet. If you have persistent nausea and/or vomiting, report this to your surgeon.
- Your surgeon or nurse will review with you when you can return to normal activities.
- When you get home, call your surgeon to make a follow up postoperative appointment to check your surgical site. It is very important to keep this appointment.

Source: American College of Surgeons @ www.medem.com Retrieved May 2005

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