

# Appendectomy

## Follow-up appointment

Yes

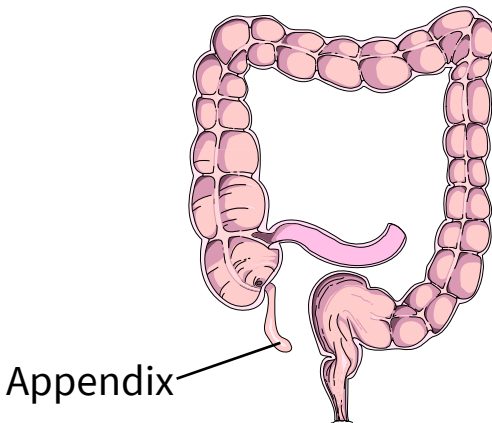
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Take your next medication at  
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# Appendectomy

Your surgeon has arranged for you to have your appendix removed. This surgery is called an **appendectomy**. This is usually done using a laparoscope. A laparoscope is like a thin telescope with a light on the end. It lets the surgeon see inside your abdomen (stomach area) and do the surgery without large incisions (cuts).

This pamphlet explains what will happen to you after surgery and how you can take part in your care.



## What is the appendix?

The appendix is a small tube-like organ that is attached to your intestine. It is in the lower right area of the abdomen below the belly button. Exactly what the appendix does is still not fully understood.

Having an inflamed (swollen) or an infected appendix is called **appendicitis**. If not treated with antibiotics (medication that fights bacteria) or surgery, the appendix can burst and cause a serious infection in the lining of the abdomen. This infection is called **peritonitis**.

## **What happens after surgery?**

- You will stay in the hospital overnight after your surgery. Most people go home the next day.
- Most people feel tired and have pain at the incision site.
- You may also have pain in your shoulder. This is a common side effect of surgery done using a laparoscope.
- You may feel sick to your stomach or have stiff or sore muscles.
- If you are in pain, ask your nurse for medication. Acetaminophen (Tylenol® Extra Strength) or ibuprofen (Advil®) may be prescribed for pain control and should be taken every 4 to 6 hours.
- After you are discharged home, you may continue to take Acetaminophen (Tylenol® Extra Strength) or ibuprofen (Advil®), as needed at home. You may buy these over-the-counter medications at your local drugstore or pharmacy.

**Do not drink alcohol while you are taking pain medication.**



## **Where will my incisions be?**

You will have 3 incisions:

- › The biggest will be above your belly button. It will be about 1 inch (2 to 3 cm) long and will be covered by strong pieces of tape called Steri-Strips™.
- › There will be 2 smaller 5 mm incisions above your pubic hair and on your left side. These will also be covered with Steri-Strips™.
- › The Steri-Strips™ can be peeled off as they get loose, about 7 to 10 days after your surgery.

## **When can I shower/bathe?**

- **Do not have a bath until the incisions are healed.** This is usually 10 days after your surgery.
- You may shower. Pat the Steri-Strips™ dry (**do not rub**).

## **Can I eat after my surgery?**

- While in the hospital, you will get fluids from your intravenous (IV) until you are able to eat and drink without nausea (feeling sick to your stomach).

- When at home, eat smaller meals more often. It may take time for your appetite to return to normal. Eating healthy meals will help you get back your strength and heal.
- You may not be able to poop for few days after surgery. This is normal. Pain medications, less activity, and eating less can cause constipation (not being able to poop). To help with this:
  - › Drink 8 to 10 glasses of water a day unless you are not allowed to because of another health problem.
  - › Try to eat foods high in fibre, such as bran cereals, whole wheat bread, fruits, and vegetables.
  - › Ask your primary health care provider about using laxatives or stool softeners, if you need them.

## **Will I be able to get up and move around after surgery?**

Yes — it is important to move after surgery to prevent complications.

- › Move your legs and wiggle your toes often to improve blood flow. This prevents blood clots in the veins of your legs.
- › While in the hospital, your nurse will help you get out of bed. Slowly start to move around more. Even if this is painful, it is important to get up and move around.

- › To prevent pneumonia (lung infection), you will be asked to do deep breathing exercises every 1 to 2 hours.

## When can I go home?

Most people go home the day after their surgery. Your surgeon will talk about this with you.

### At home:

- Take it easy for the first few days.
- If you are a caregiver, make plans to have someone available to help.
- You may feel tired easily and need extra rest. This is normal. Bit by bit, your energy will return.
- Light housework, preparing meals, walking, and riding as a passenger in a car for a short distance are good activities once you feel able.

### For 6 weeks after surgery:

- **Do not** vacuum, strain, or lift anything over 10 pounds (including children).
- **Avoid** strenuous (hard) activities including sports, unless told otherwise by your surgeon.

## When can I drive?

It takes some time for your concentration and reflexes to return to normal. For this reason, **do not drive for 1 week (7 days)** after returning home unless told otherwise by your surgeon.

**Do not drive if you are taking pain medication.**

## **When can I return to work?**

This will depend on your type of work, as well as your general health and recovery. Ask your surgeon about this.

## **When can I have sex?**

You may have sex again whenever you feel well enough.

### **Call your primary health care provider or surgeon's office if you have:**

- › vomiting (throwing up)
- › fever (temperature above 38.5° C/101.3° F) or chills
- › redness, swelling, or warmth around the incision (cut)
- › separation of the edges of the incision
- › pain or tenderness around the incision that is getting worse
- › pain that is not helped by pain medication

**If you cannot talk to your primary health care provider or surgeon, call 811 or go to the nearest Emergency Department.**

# Questions for my health care team:

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Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

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*Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!*

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*Prepared by: General Surgery, QEII*

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.