



Patient & Family Guide
2018

Appendectomy

Aussi disponible en français :
Appendicectomie (FF85-1895)

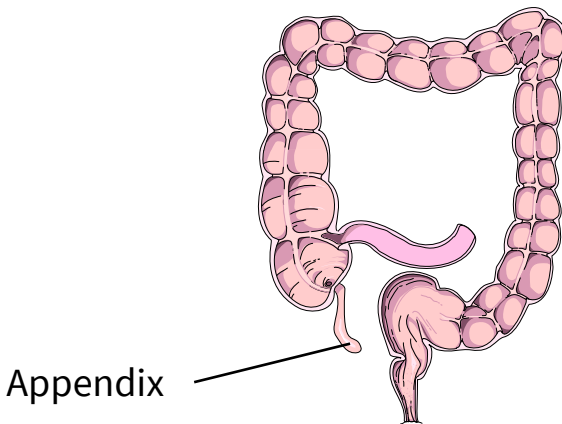


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Appendectomy

Your surgeon has arranged for you to have your appendix removed (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 needing 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 (bowel). It is in the lower right area of the abdomen below the belly button. Its purpose is not understood. Having an inflamed or infected appendix is called appendicitis. If not treated, an inflamed or infected appendix can burst and cause a serious infection in the lining of the abdomen (peritonitis).

How will I feel after my surgery?

Most people feel tired and have pain at the site of the surgery and/or in their shoulder. Some people may feel sick to their stomach or have stiff or sore muscles.

Will I have pain?

You will have some discomfort at the site of your surgery. Ask your nurse for medication. It may be given by pill or injection. Tylenol® Extra Strength and ibuprofen are prescribed for pain control, taken every 4-6 hours. These can be bought over the counter at your 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 (2-3 cm) long and will be covered by pieces of tape called Steri-Strips™. There will also be 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 7-10 days after your surgery.

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

Can I eat after my surgery?

- You will get fluid from your intravenous (IV) until you are able to eat and drink without nausea.
- 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.
- Your bowels may not move for a few days after surgery. This is normal. Pain medications, less activity, and eating less can cause constipation.
 - › Drink 8-10 glasses of water a day unless you are not allowed to because of another health problem.
 - › Try to eat foods high in fibre and roughage, such as bran cereals, whole wheat bread, fruits, and vegetables.
 - › Ask your doctor about using laxatives or stool softeners if you need them. You do not need to have a bowel movement every day to be healthy.

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

- Move your legs and wiggle your toes often to improve blood flow. This prevents blood clots in the veins of your legs.
- Your nurse will help you get out of bed. You will gradually increase your activity. Although you may have discomfort, it is important to get up and move around.

- To prevent pneumonia (lung infection), you will be asked to do deep breathing exercises every 1-2 hours.
- Your first few days at home should be quiet. You will find that you feel tired easily and may need extra rest. 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.
- Avoid vacuuming, heavy lifting (over 15 pounds), straining, and strenuous activities including sports for 6 weeks after surgery, unless told otherwise by your doctor.

When can I go home?

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

When can I drive?

It takes some time for your concentration and reflexes to return to normal. For this reason you may not drive for 1 week after returning home unless told otherwise by your doctor. **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.

When can I have sex?

You may resume sexual activity whenever you feel well enough.

When should I call my surgeon?

Call your surgeon if you have any of these symptoms:

- › vomiting
- › fever or chills
- › redness, swelling, or warmth around the incision
- › separation of the edges of the incision
- › increasing pain or tenderness around the incision
- › pain that is not helped by the pain medication you are taking

If your surgeon is not available:

Call your family doctor or go to the nearest Emergency Department.

Followup care

Return appointment

Yes

No

Take your next medication at _____ a.m. / p.m.

Questions

Write down any questions you have for your doctor or other health care team members.

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

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

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