



Information for You from Your Health Care Team

Having an Appendectomy

General Information

The appendix is a narrow sack that hangs down from the large bowel in the lower right part of the belly. The appendix really has no purpose. An Appendectomy (ah-pen-dek-tuh-mee) is a surgery to remove the appendix. The appendix may be removed during other surgeries or for appendicitis. Appendicitis is when the appendix becomes swollen and infected. Sometimes, appendicitis can be mistaken for other illnesses, such as a stomach virus. The child may even seem to begin to feel better, but will then become sick again. If appendicitis is not treated in a day or two, the appendix will break open. When the appendix breaks the infection will spread into the inside of the belly. This is called peritonitis (per-at-tin-it-es).

Sign and Symptoms of Appendicitis

- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Lack of Hunger
- Upset stomach
- Fever
- Irritable
- Right lower belly pain
- Belly pain worse when child moves or coughs
- Belly ache around the belly button

Having an Appendectomy

Before surgery, your child will have an IV started for fluids and medicines. One of the medicines will help your child go to sleep. Your child will not feel anything during surgery. There are two ways the appendix can be removed.

- **Open Appendectomy**
After your child is asleep, the doctor will make a small cut on the right side of the belly. The doctor will remove the appendix through this small opening.
- **Laparoscopic Appendectomy**
After your child is asleep, the doctor makes three small holes in the belly. The doctor uses a special camera called a laparoscope to remove the appendix through one of the small holes.

What to Expect After Surgery

- Your child may be sleepy for the rest of the day on the day of surgery.
- The doctor will order medicine for pain relief.
- An IV will be needed for fluids and antibiotics. Once your child can eat solid foods, the IV will not be needed anymore.
- The stitches will be under the skin and will slowly dissolve once the wound heals.
- Small white tape or bandages will be over the small puncture wounds. The bandage is several small strips of tape called steri-strips.
- The wound may have a drain or tube.
- There may be a small amount of bloody drainage from the wound. This is normal.
- Your child's temperature may increase (101° F to 102° F) for a few days.
- Your child may stay in the hospital for several days to one week.
- There may be a tube in the nose which goes down into the stomach. This will keep the stomach empty.
- The doctor will tell you when your child may eat. Usually, this is not until a day or two after surgery.
- Your child may feel sick and vomit after surgery. This is because of the infection in the belly.

Special Care

- Keep wound clean and dry for at least 48 hours after surgery. No tub baths or showers during this time.
- Steri-strips should remain on at least 3 days. When they begin to peel off, that is okay.
- Your doctor will tell you when your child can return to school.
- Your child should not take gym class, play sports, climbing games, or ride bikes until your doctor says it is okay (usually 3 weeks).
- Call your doctor's office or clinic to schedule a check-up in 10 days to 2 weeks after surgery.
- Your child may need to continue to take antibiotics once home.

CALL THE DOCTOR IF

- The wound looks red, has white or yellow drainage, or the drainage has a foul odor.
- There is a lot of swelling, the wound is hot to touch or has a lump that you can feel.
- Your child's temperature is greater than 101.5° F rectally or greater than 100.5° F by mouth. Slight fevers are normal.

Speak up if you have any questions or concerns

