

Laparoscopic Appendectomy

What is it?

An **appendectomy** is a surgery to remove your appendix. A **laparoscopic** appendectomy is done with a surgical tool called a **laparoscope**. Laparoscopic appendectomy is a way of doing the surgery with a few smaller incisions (cuts) instead of one longer one. You'll have smaller scars and, in most cases, fewer complications and a faster recovery.

In some cases — such as if your appendix has already burst — your doctor may decide to do a traditional appendectomy. This type of surgery requires a longer incision to remove the appendix.

Why do I need an appendectomy?

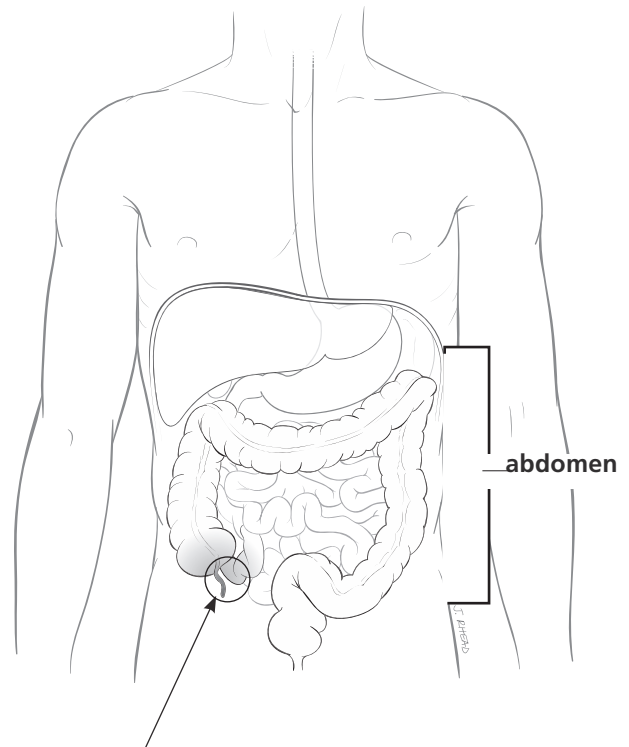
Appendectomy is the treatment for **appendicitis**, a condition in which your appendix becomes infected and inflamed. An appendectomy is almost always an emergency surgery. If an infected appendix is not removed right away, it may burst and cause further problems, even death.

Since the appendix has no known function, living without it causes no known health problems.

What are the symptoms of appendicitis?

Symptoms of appendicitis can include:

- Abdominal pain, first near the navel (belly button), then moving to the lower right
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea or vomiting
- Abdominal swelling
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Fever



The **appendix** is a small pouch of tissue located near where the small intestine meets the large intestine (colon). Since it has no known function, living without it causes no health problems.

How does my doctor diagnose appendicitis?

Your doctor will examine you and ask questions about your symptoms and medical history. You may also have blood tests and imaging tests (such as x-rays). However, there is no test that tells your doctor for sure that appendicitis is causing your symptoms. Your doctor will use his or her best clinical judgment.

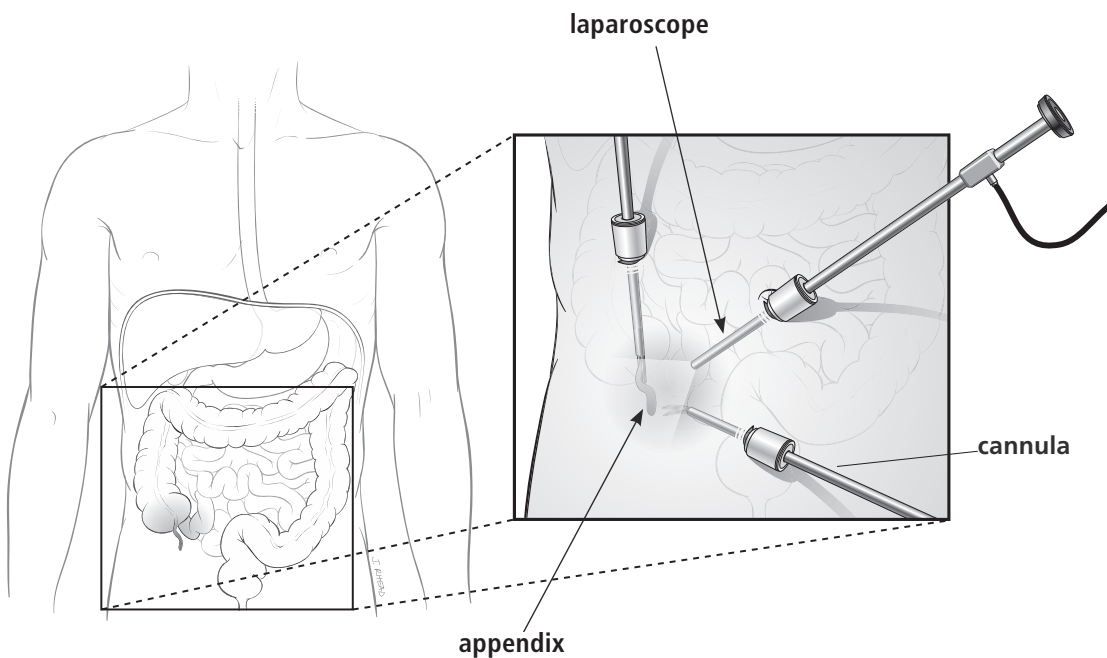
Talking with your doctor about this procedure

Your doctor will talk with you about your procedure, including the most common benefits, risks, and alternatives. Other benefits and risks may apply in your unique medical situation. The conversation you have with your doctor is the most important part of learning about your surgery and what to expect.

Potential benefits	Risks and potential complications	Alternatives
<p>Laparoscopic appendectomy has several advantages over traditional appendectomy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Less pain after surgery• Faster return of bowel function and normal activities• Smaller scars• Shorter hospital stay	<p>With any surgery, complications are possible. Laparoscopic appendectomy has relatively few risks compared to other abdominal surgeries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The greatest risk is infection in and around the incisions or inside the abdomen.• Other, rarer risks include injury to nearby organs, blood clots, urinary infection, urinary retention, and heart or breathing problems. These risks may be associated with other health conditions you have. Your doctor will consider these risks and discuss them with you.	<p>Once you have appendicitis, there is no known medical therapy. The appendix needs to be surgically removed. The alternative to laparoscopic appendectomy is traditional appendectomy (with one longer incision).</p>

What happens before the procedure?

- You may be given a sedative to make you sleepy.
- You'll be given general anesthesia. This makes you sleep and prevents you from feeling anything during the surgery. It will be given through an intravenous (IV) line attached to your hand or forearm.
- A breathing tube will be placed in your throat to keep your airway open during surgery.



What happens during the procedure?

The surgery will last about an hour.

- Your doctor will make 3 or 4 very small (¼-inch to ½-inch) incisions through the skin of your abdomen.
- Your abdomen will be inflated with a harmless gas. This creates more space for your doctor to see your appendix and other organs.
- The doctor will insert a narrow tube, called a **cannula**, through one of the incisions.
- A **laparoscope** (a long tube with a tiny video camera at the end) will be inserted through the cannula. The camera projects an enlarged image of the inside of your abdomen, including your appendix, on a screen.
- Additional cannulas will be inserted through the other incisions. The doctor will insert small tools through these and remove the appendix.

What happens after the procedure?

- **Closing your incisions.** After the appendix is removed, the incisions will be closed with small sutures (stitches), small strips of tape (Steri-Strips), or both. A dressing (bandage) may be placed over the incisions.
- **Monitoring your recovery.** After the procedure, you will be taken to a recovery room where your vital signs (temperature, pulse, breathing rate, and blood pressure) will be monitored for about an hour or more.
- **Going home.** Most people go home the same day. Before you leave, your nurse will provide instructions. A friend or family member should take notes to help you remember everything. A responsible adult needs to drive you home and stay with you for the first 24 hours.

How do I care for myself at home?

Incision care

- You can remove your dressings (bandages) after _____ days, or when _____.
- You can take a bath or shower after _____ days.
- If you have Steri-Strips, you can usually leave them in place until they fall off — usually in 7 to 10 days. Your doctor may remove the Steri-Strips and any stitches at your follow-up visit. If the edges of the Steri-Strips start to peel, you may trim them back. Let your doctor know if the Steri-Strips irritate your skin. In this case, you may need to remove them earlier.
- You may have a small amount of bleeding from your surgical incisions. This is normal. Women may have some vaginal bleeding. If so, use pads, not tampons.
- Watch for signs of infection at the incision site and report them to your doctor. Signs include increased redness or swelling, pus, or fever over 101°F.

Pain management

- After surgery, you may have pain or irritation around your incisions. This may take a few weeks to go away. Over the first few days, you may also have:
 - Shoulder or neck pain. This is from nerve irritation caused by the gas injected into your abdomen during the procedure. The pain may get better if you change positions.
 - Cramping or swelling in your abdomen.
 - A sore throat.
- **Take your pain medication as prescribed by your doctor.** When your pain is controlled well, your body can focus more on healing. The pain medication your doctor has prescribed for you to take at home is:

Take your pain medication as ordered by your doctor. Don't wait for the pain to get too bad.

- **Don't take any pain medication that your doctor has not recommended,** and don't drink alcohol while taking pain medication.
- **Pain medication may cause constipation.** If necessary, you may take over-the-counter stool softeners or laxatives.

Rest, activity, and work

Getting plenty of rest after surgery will help you heal. It's also important to get up and move during the day.

- **Take it easy the first day.** Rest on the day of surgery, other than getting up for the bathroom or to get meals or medication.
- **After that, get up and walk 4 to 5 times a day.** This will improve the circulation in your legs and reduce the risk of blood clots or muscle soreness. Gradually increase the time and distance that you walk each day.
- **Deep breathing** for the first few days after surgery is also helpful.
- **Avoid heavy lifting or exercise for the first 7 days** or as otherwise instructed by your doctor.
- **You may return to your normal daily activities** after _____.
- **Return to work when your doctor recommends.** Many patients can return to office work within a week. If your work is physically strenuous and a light duty assignment is not available, you may need to be off work longer. You may return to work after _____.

Follow-up appointment

Your doctor will usually want to see you about a week after the procedure. Be sure to keep your follow-up appointment so your doctor can see how well you're healing.

Your follow-up appointment is on:

_____ (date)
at _____ (time)
with _____ (doctor)
at _____ (place)

When should I contact my doctor?

Contact your doctor if you experience any of the following:

- Severe abdominal pain, or pain you can't control
- Severe bloating or swollen stomach
- Chills
- Fever above 101°F
- Nausea or vomiting that doesn't stop
- Bleeding from the rectum
- Increasing redness or pus draining from any of your incisions
- Inability to urinate (pee) 8 to 10 hours after surgery
- No bowel movement within 3 days of surgery
- Feeling faint or light-headed even when lying down
- Other: _____

Other instructions
