

Laparoscopic Appendectomy (appendix removal): *Discharge instructions*

This handout explains how to care for yourself when you get home. Your healthcare providers may have other instructions for you to follow.

What can I expect after surgery?

After surgery, you may feel:

- **Incision pain.** This will get better over the first few days, but may take a few weeks to go away completely.
- **Shoulder or neck pain for the first 2 or 3 days.** This is from nerve irritation caused by the gas injected into your abdomen during the procedure. The pain often gets better as you change positions.
- **Cramping or swelling in your abdomen** for the first several days.
- **A sore throat for 1 to 2 days after the surgery.** This is caused by irritation from the breathing tube placed during the procedure.
- **Nausea (feeling sick to your stomach) lasting for a day or two.** This is caused by some of the anesthesia medicines used in your surgery. Ask your surgeon about medicine that can help control nausea when you get home. Popsicles, apple juice, and electrolyte drinks may help you feel better. Avoid beverages that are acidic (such as orange juice), have milk in them, or are carbonated (such as soda).

How do I care for myself at home?

Incision care

- You can take a shower after _____ days.
- You can take a bath after _____ days.
- You can remove your dressings (bandages) after _____ days, or when _____.

When should I call my doctor?

Call your doctor if you have:

- Severe belly pain or pain you can't control
- Severe bloating or a swollen stomach
- You have chills or a 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

OR

- You can't urinate (pee) 8 to 10 hours after surgery
- You haven't had a bowel movement (poop) within 3 days of surgery
- You feel faint or light-headed, even when lying down.

- 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.
- If you have surgical strips, you can usually leave them in place until they fall off. This usually happens within 7 to 10 days. Your doctor may remove them, along with any stitches, at your follow-up visit. If the edges of the surgical strips start to peel, you may trim them back. Let your doctor know if the surgical strips irritate your skin. If so, they may need to be removed earlier.
- Watch for signs of infection at the incision site (increased redness or swelling, pus, or fever over 101°F) and report them to your doctor.

Medicines

After your surgery, your doctor will prescribe medicines to help you heal. These may include:

- **Antibiotics.** These help prevent infections caused by bacteria. Always take antibiotics exactly as prescribed by your doctor. Keep taking them until they're completely gone.
- **Pain medicine.** These will help control or decrease your pain. They will not take away your pain completely. **Take pain medicines exactly as prescribed by your doctor.** This will keep your pain from getting worse and make it easier to manage. In a few days, your pain should lessen and you can wait longer between doses. If you have severe pain, even after taking your pain medicine, tell your doctor right away.
 - The pain medicine your doctor recommends for you is _____.
Take _____ pills every _____.
 - **Take your pain medicine exactly as your doctor tells you to.** Take them with broth or food to prevent stomach upset.
 - Pain medicine may cause constipation. You may take an over-the-counter stool softener or laxative, if needed.

Rest, activity, and work

- Rest on the day of your surgery.
- Get up and walk for 10 to 15 minutes 4 to 5 times a day, starting on _____. 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.
- Do deep breathing exercises for the first few days after surgery.

- Avoid heavy lifting or intense exercise for the first 7 days or as instructed by your doctor.
- You can go back to your normal routine when your doctor says it's okay, usually within 1 to 2 weeks.

Follow-up appointment

Your doctor will usually want to see you about a week after the procedure. Be sure to go to your follow-up appointment so your doctor can see how your incisions are healing.

Your follow-up appointment is:

Date/Time: _____

Place: _____

Doctor: _____

Instructions from my doctor:

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