

Appendectomy

KEY POINTS

- An appendectomy is surgery to remove the appendix, usually because it is swollen or infected. It is important to get treatment for an infected appendix, because if it breaks open, it can cause a life-threatening infection in the belly.
 - Ask your provider how long it will take to recover and how to take care of yourself at home.
 - Make sure you know what symptoms or problems you should watch for and what to do if you have them.
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What is an appendectomy?

An appendectomy is surgery to remove the appendix, usually because it is swollen or infected. The appendix is a small finger-shaped pouch where the large and small intestines join together. Healthcare providers are not sure what the appendix does. Removing it does not seem to affect your health.

Swelling and irritation of the appendix is called appendicitis.

When is it used?

It is important to get treatment for appendicitis before the appendix ruptures. A rupture is a break or tear in the appendix. If an infected appendix breaks open, it can cause a life-threatening infection in the belly.

If your appendix has already ruptured, you may not be able to have surgery until the infection is under control. You will need IV antibiotic medicine in the hospital.

How do I prepare for this procedure?

Often an appendectomy is an emergency procedure and there is no time to prepare. If you do have time to prepare before the surgery:

- Make plans for your care and recovery after the operation. Allow for time to rest. Try to find people to help you with your day-to-day duties while you recover.
- Follow your healthcare provider's instructions about not smoking before and after the procedure. Smokers heal more slowly after surgery. They are also more likely to have breathing problems during surgery.
- You may or may not need to take your regular medicines the day of the procedure. Tell your healthcare provider about all medicines and supplements that you take. Some products may increase your risk of side effects. Ask your healthcare provider if you need to avoid taking any medicine or supplements before the procedure.

- Tell your healthcare provider if you have any food, medicine, or other allergies such as latex.
- Your healthcare provider will tell you when to stop eating and drinking before the procedure. This helps to keep you from vomiting during the procedure.
- Follow any other instructions your provider gives you.
- Ask any questions you have before the procedure. You should understand what your healthcare provider is going to do. You have the right to make decisions about your healthcare and to give permission for any tests or procedures.

What happens during the procedure?

You will be given general anesthesia to keep you from feeling pain during the procedure. Regional anesthesia numbs part of your body while you stay awake. General anesthesia relaxes your muscles and puts you into a deep sleep. A breathing tube is usually put in your throat when you have general anesthesia.

The appendix may be removed with either laparoscopic or open surgery:

- Laparoscopic surgery is done through several small cuts in the belly. A laparoscope is a lighted tube with a camera. Your provider can put the scope and tools into your belly through the small cuts to look inside your belly and remove the appendix. This may not be done if your appendix has ruptured.
- Open surgery is done with one larger cut in your lower right belly. The cut is usually about 2 to 3 inches long.

Your surgeon may put a tube in the wound to collect blood, pus, and other fluids that drain from a wound after surgery. Your surgeon will close the wound with stitches.

- Your provider may prescribe medicine to:
 - Treat pain
 - Treat or prevent an infection
 - Treat or prevent side effects such as nausea or constipation
 - Soften stool and reduce straining with a bowel movement

Your provider may recommend other types of therapy to help relieve pain or other symptoms.

What happens after the procedure?

You may stay in the hospital after the surgery. If your appendix ruptured or you have an infection, you may need to stay in the hospital longer and it will take more time to recover. If you have a drainage tube, it will be removed when the drainage has stopped. You may need antibiotic medicine and fluids through an IV.

Follow your healthcare provider's instructions. If an antibiotic has been prescribed when you go home, take it for as long as your healthcare provider prescribes, even if you feel better. Ask your provider:

- How long it will take to recover
- If there are activities you should avoid and when you can return to normal activities

- How to take care of yourself at home
- What symptoms or problems you should watch for and what to do if you have them

Make sure you know when you should come back for a checkup. Keep all appointments for provider visits or tests.

What are the risks of this procedure?

Every procedure or treatment has risks. Some possible risks of this procedure include:

- You may have problems with anesthesia.
- You may have an infection, bleeding, or blood clots.
- Other parts of your body may be injured during the procedure.

Ask your healthcare provider how these risks apply to you. Be sure to discuss any other questions or concerns that you may have.

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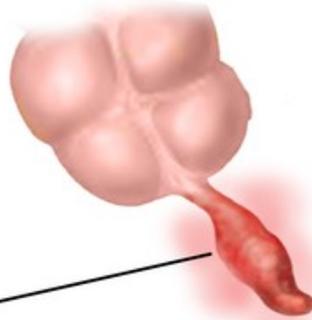
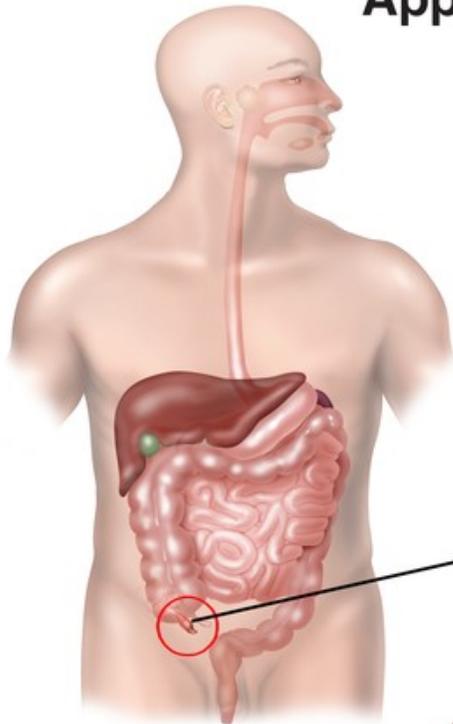
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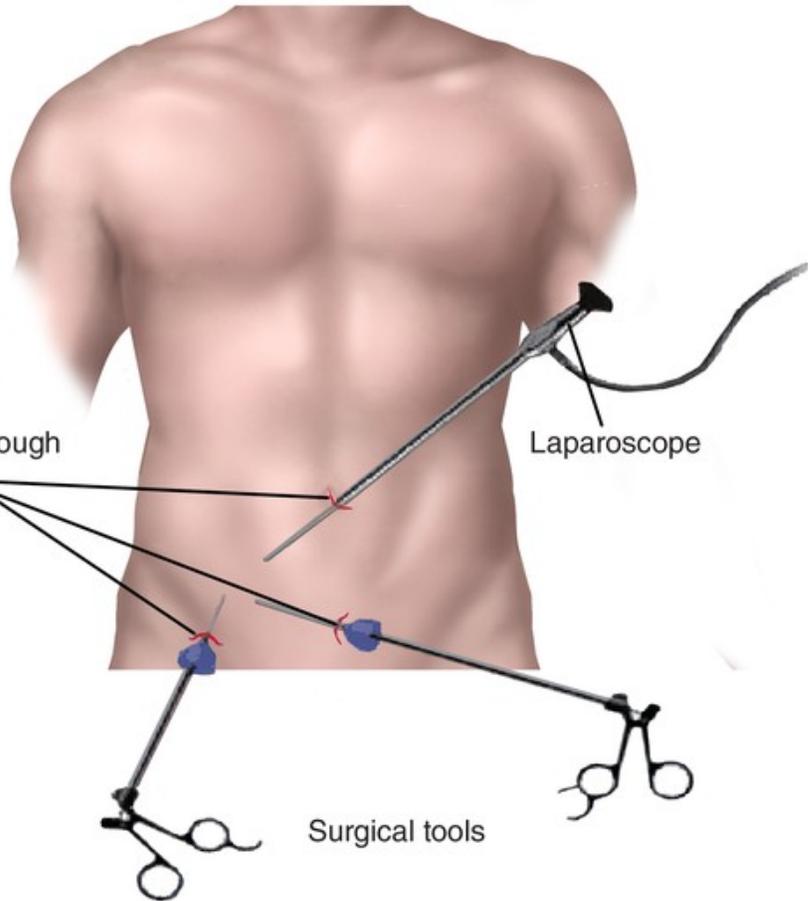
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Appendectomy is surgery to remove a swollen or infected appendix.



Laparoscopic surgery is done through several small cuts in the belly.



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