



A Child with Appendicitis

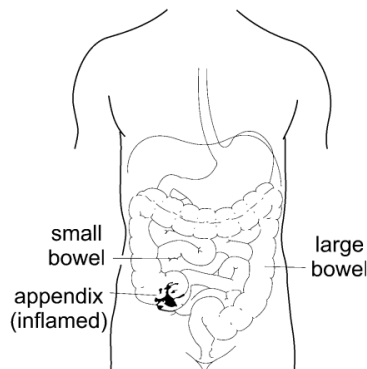
What is the appendix?

The appendix is a tiny pouch attached to the large bowel in the right lower part of the abdomen. It has no known job.

What is appendicitis?

“Appendicitis” is swelling (inflammation) and infection of the appendix. It happens when something blocks the appendix, such as stool or swollen lymph nodes.

Picture of the abdomen showing the appendix:



What are the signs and symptoms of appendicitis?

A child may have some or all of the following signs:

- Pain around the belly-button that moves to the right lower part of the abdomen. It may start as a mild discomfort and gets worse over time. It hurts more when the child moves.
- The abdomen is very tender to touch.
- Not wanting to eat.
- Nausea or feeling sick to their stomach.
- Vomits or throws up.
- Has less energy.
- Fever (> 38° Celsius) or chills.

As the appendicitis gets worse, the appendix can break open causing bacteria (germs) to spill into the abdomen making the child very ill. If the appendix breaks open, it is called a “perforated” appendix.

How is appendicitis diagnosed?

- You and your child will be asked questions about their overall health and about the current illness.
- Your child will have a physical exam, and some tests, including blood and urine tests.
- An ultrasound of the abdomen may be done. The technologist will put some warm jelly over the part of the body that the doctor wants to see, and then move a smooth wand over that part of the body. Sound waves and a computer are used to create the pictures. Please ask for the pamphlet: “Having an Ultrasound” for tips on how to prepare your child for this.
- A CT scan of the abdomen may be done. In a CT, x-rays are used to make detailed pictures of the inside of the body. Please ask for the pamphlet “All about having a CT Scan” for tips on how to prepare your child for this.

How is appendicitis treated?

- Surgery is needed to remove the appendix.
- Your child cannot eat or drink before surgery. The stomach must be empty when your child is put to sleep in the operating room.
- An intravenous (IV or small tube in the vein) will be started to give pain medicine, antibiotics to help prevent infection, and fluids.
- The surgery will take place the same day. The timing depends on when the operating room and Surgeon are available. Your child may stay in the Emergency Department until surgery, or first be admitted to a hospital ward.
- You may go with your child to the doors of the Operating Room. You will be shown where to wait.
- In the Operating Room, the Anesthetist will give your child medicine to make them sleep. They make sure your child will not feel any pain and will not wake up until the surgery is finished.



Surgery:

- Surgery may take 1 to 2 hours.
- There are two ways to remove the appendix. The surgeon will explain the type of surgery your child will have and answer any of your questions.
- The two types of surgery are:
 - 1) *Open appendectomy* – one small incision (cut) is made in the right lower part of the abdomen (belly).
 - 2) *Laparoscopic appendectomy* – three very small incisions (cuts) are made. One incision is hidden in the belly-button. The other two are at the sides of the abdomen. A small camera called a “laparoscope” is inserted through one of the incisions. Several small surgical tools are used through these incisions to take the appendix out.
- The Surgeon will speak to you after the surgery, tell how the appendix looked and what the plan is for your child.

The Recovery Room

- From the operating room, your child will go to the Recovery Room (also called the Post-Anesthesia Care Unit or PACU). It is located on the second floor of the Ann Thomas Building. Children stay there about 45 minutes before they go to the ward CK3.
- As soon as your child is awake and comfortable, you will be called in to visit. If there are a lot of other patients in the Recovery Room, only one parent may stay.

The incision

- The incisions are closed with stitches. Dissolvable stitches are most often used. Your Surgeon will tell you if there are stitches that need to be removed about 10 days after surgery.
- Small sticker strips called steri-strips are placed over the incisions for extra support.

- Another bandage is placed over top of the steri-strips and removed 3 days after surgery. It will be changed before going home if it is soiled.
- After the bandage is removed, let the steri-strips fall off on their own. They will get wet and start curling after bathing.

What happens after surgery?

Simple Appendicitis:

In a simple appendicitis, the appendix has not broken open. Children are usually able to go home 24 to 48 hours after surgery once they are able to eat and drink and their pain is controlled with medicine by mouth.

Perforated Appendicitis:

This means that the appendix has broken open and leaked stool and bacteria into the abdomen. Your child will need to stay in hospital for about 5 days for IV antibiotics to help prevent infection. A tube may be placed through your child’s nose into the stomach to keep your child from vomiting. This tube will be removed when your child’s bowels wake up and become active.

***You will be given the booklet
“Welcome to CK3”.
Please ask for it if we forget!***

On the ward your child will:

- Receive pain medicine through the IV. Once they are able to drink they may take medicine by mouth.
- Be given clear fluids to drink such as 7-up or water. As long as your child does not throw up, they can slowly start drinking and eating more.
- Get up to walk 3 to 4 times a day. A rest time between activity is also important.
- Have the dressing, IV site and any pain checked regularly.
 - If your child is still in hospital on the 3rd day after surgery the dressing will be removed. This dressing only needs to be replaced if the incisions (cuts) are wet. The steri-strips stay on.



- Have their vital signs (temperature, heart rate, breathing) taken every four hours. This is done less often as they become well.
- Some children receive IV antibiotics after surgery depending on how the appendix looks during the surgery. If the appendix was perforated your child will be switched to antibiotics by mouth to complete a total of ten days.

When will my child be able to go home?

- When your child has received all their IV antibiotics.
- When their pain is controlled with pain medicine taken by mouth.
- When your child can eat and drink without throwing up, and their stomach is flat and soft.
- If your child does not have a fever.
- When your child is able to move around fairly well.

How Do I Care For My Child After We Leave the Hospital?

What to do:

- Your child may shower on the 3rd day after surgery and may have a bath on the 5th day after surgery.
- They should not go in a swimming pool for at least 7 days after surgery.

Medications:

- Give pain medicine as your child needs it and as directed.
- For children with a perforated appendicitis, finish all the antibiotics ordered for your child. Call the Surgeon if your child has trouble taking the medication.

What to watch for:

- If there is still a dressing, check the dressing 1 to 2 times a day. You do not need a dressing if

the wound is clean and dry. Remove the dressing on the 3rd day after surgery.

- The steri-strips will get wet with showering and fall off on their own.
- Watch the incision (cut) for signs of skin infection: redness, swelling, extreme tenderness and pus.
- Watch for signs of an infection in the abdomen. Your child may have worsening abdominal pain, loss of appetite, nausea and vomiting, and fever. They will feel unwell.

Activity:

- Encourage your child to move about as much as possible but also allow for plenty of rest.
- Encourage quiet activities the first few days.
- Your child may return to school when they feel well enough.
- No contact sports or high activity sports such as bike riding, gym class, dance etc. for two weeks.

Follow-Up:

- If you live in or close to Winnipeg, an appointment may be arranged for you to see the Surgeon in one to two weeks.
>If the office is closed when you leave hospital, you will be asked to call the Surgeon's office to book your appointment.
- If you live far away you do not need to come back to see the surgeon. Please see your family doctor or nurse at the health care centre or Nursing Station one to two weeks after surgery.

When to call for help:

- If there are signs of infection, as above.
- If you have any questions or concerns.



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Who to call for help:

- Call your Surgeon or, if outside of Winnipeg, see your local doctor, Health Centre, Nursing Station or Emergency Department.
- The Surgical Nurse Practitioner at: 204-787-4047 (within regular working hours).
- Call Health Links at 204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257 (toll free) if you cannot reach your doctor.

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