

Appendicectomy

GS07 Lite - Expires end of January 2026



This fact sheet is for general information about this procedure only. It is not intended to be used as medical advice or to replace advice that your relevant healthcare professional would give you. If you have a particular medical problem, please consult a healthcare professional.

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What is an appendicectomy?

An appendicectomy is a procedure to remove your appendix (part of your large bowel).

Appendicitis means inflammation of your appendix and is a common problem that is best treated by surgery.

What are the benefits?

Surgery removes the inflamed appendix and allows infected pus to be washed out. The aim is to prevent the serious complications that appendicitis can cause.

Are there any alternatives?

Studies have shown that antibiotics can be as effective as surgery. However, your recovery may be longer and sometimes the antibiotics are not effective and an abscess (a collection of pus) can form in the tissues. If an abscess continues or if you become unwell even with antibiotics, you will need a procedure.

What does the procedure involve?

The procedure is performed under a general anaesthetic and usually takes 1 to 2 hours.

Your surgeon will tie off the blood supply to your appendix, stitch the base and then remove it.

If your appendix is not inflamed and there is no other obvious cause for the pain, your surgeon will usually remove your appendix anyway. The reason is that sometimes the inside of the appendix can be inflamed while the outside looks normal.

Laparoscopic (keyhole) surgery

Your surgeon may use keyhole surgery as this is associated with less pain, less scarring and a faster return to normal activities.

Open surgery

The procedure is the same but it is performed through a larger cut on your lower abdomen.

What complications can happen?

Possible complications of this procedure are shown below. Some may be serious and can even be life threatening (risk: less than 1 in 10,000).

General complications of any procedure

- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Allergic reaction to the equipment, materials or medication
- Developing a hernia in the scar
- Blood clot in your leg
- Blood clot in your lung
- Chest infection

Specific complications of this procedure

Keyhole surgery complications

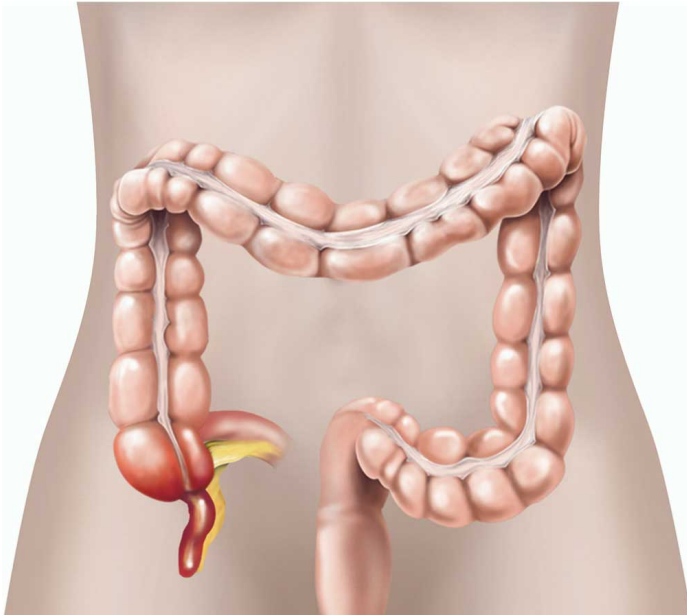
- Damage to structures such as your bowel, bladder or blood vessels
- Developing a hernia
- Surgical emphysema
- Gas embolism

Appendicectomy complications

- Incorrect diagnosis
- Developing an abscess within your abdomen
- Difficulty passing urine
- Continued bowel paralysis
- Developing a leak where your appendix has been cut off from your bowel
- Tissues can join together in an abnormal way
- Stump appendicitis, where part of your appendix is left behind

Consequences of this procedure

- Pain
- Scarring of your skin



An inflamed appendix

What happens after the procedure?

You should be able to go home 3 to 5 days after a procedure for simple appendicitis or about a week after a procedure for a burst appendix.

You should be able to return to work after about 2 to 4 weeks, depending on how much surgery you need and your type of work.

Regular exercise should improve your long-term health. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Most people make a full recovery and can return to normal activities.

Summary

Appendicitis is a common condition where your appendix becomes inflamed. Surgery should prevent the serious complications that appendicitis can cause.

Keep this information document. Use it to help you if you need to talk to the healthcare team.

Some information, such as risk and complication statistics, is taken from global studies and/or databases. Please ask your surgeon or doctor for more information about the risks that are specific to you, and they may be able to tell you about any other suitable treatments options.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant healthcare team would give you.

Acknowledgements

Reviewer

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Illustrator

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