

# Appendicectomy (child)

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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 appendicitis?

Appendicitis means inflammation of the appendix. The appendix is part of the large bowel. When it is inflamed it causes pain and makes you feel unwell. As the inflammation gets worse, it can cause an abscess (a collection of pus) to form in the tissues and the appendix may burst, causing peritonitis (inflammation of the lining of the abdomen), which is life-threatening.

## What are the benefits of surgery?

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

## Are there any alternatives to surgery?

If your child has severe appendicitis, surgery is usually the best option. However, there may be other options in some cases.

Your surgeon may recommend a course of antibiotics to help the inflammation to settle. Your child may still need an appendicectomy and this will usually be arranged up to 6 months later.

Your surgeon may perform an ultrasound scan to find out if there is an abscess and where it is. If your child does have an abscess, your surgeon may need to perform an operation to remove the pus, or drain the pus using a small tube.

## What does the operation involve?

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

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

## What complications can happen?

Some complications can be serious and can even cause death.

### General complications of any operation

- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Allergic reaction to the equipment, materials or medication

## Specific complications of this operation

### Keyhole surgery complications

- Damage to structures such as the bowel, bladder or blood vessels
- Developing a hernia near one of the cuts
- Surgical emphysema
- Gas embolism
- Conversion to open surgery

### Appendicectomy complications

- Incorrect diagnosis
- Developing an abscess within the abdomen
- Continued bowel paralysis
- Developing a leak where the appendix has been cut off from the bowel
- Developing a leak into the abdominal cavity
- Bowel obstruction
- Pylephlebitis, where infection spreads to the liver
- Stump appendicitis, where part of the appendix is left behind

## Consequences of this procedure

- Pain
- Unsightly scarring of the skin

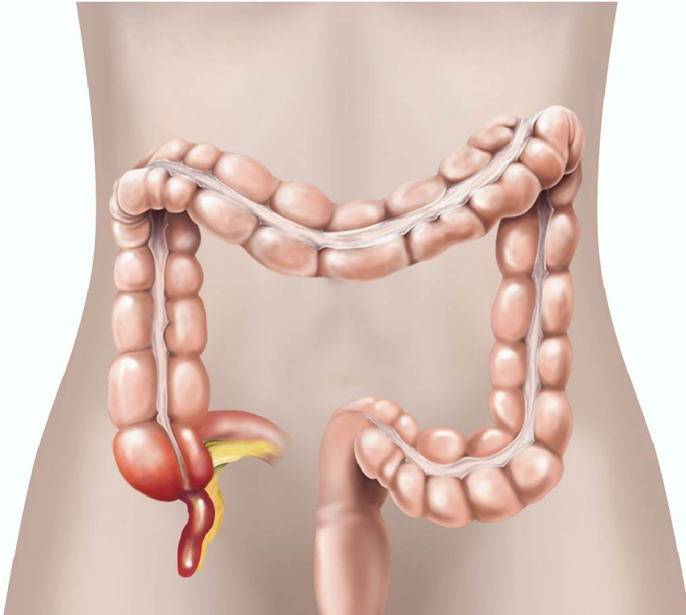
## How soon will my child recover?

Your child should be able to go home 1 to 4 days after an operation for simple appendicitis or about a week after an operation for a burst appendix.

Your child should be able to return to school after about a week, depending on how severe the appendicitis was and when they feel comfortable again. Your child can return to normal activities as soon as they feel comfortable. This may take up to 6 weeks.

## Summary

Appendicitis is a common condition where the appendix becomes inflamed. In most cases, surgery is the only dependable way to prevent



An inflamed appendix

the life-threatening risk of the appendix bursting and spreading infection throughout the abdomen.

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

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### Illustrator

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