

Let's Talk About...

Appendicitis

Appendicitis (ah-pen-di-SY-tus) is a condition where the appendix—the small pouch that opens into the large intestine—becomes swollen and filled with pus.

What causes appendicitis?

Appendicitis happens when the appendix is blocked by a piece of stool or a swelling intestine. The appendix can also become sore and infected with bacteria.

If the infected appendix is not removed, pus from an infection can build up and make a hole in the appendix. This is called ruptured appendicitis, and it causes the infection to spread throughout the abdomen.

What are the signs of appendicitis?

Signs of appendicitis include:

- Constant pain
 - Lower part of the belly
 - Around the belly button
 - Lower right side
- Increased pain when walking or touching lower side of belly
- Vomiting after complaining of pain
- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Diarrhea
- Fussiness in small children

If you think your child might have appendicitis, take them to their healthcare provider as soon as possible. The doctor will do a physical exam to see if your child has appendicitis or if they need other tests.

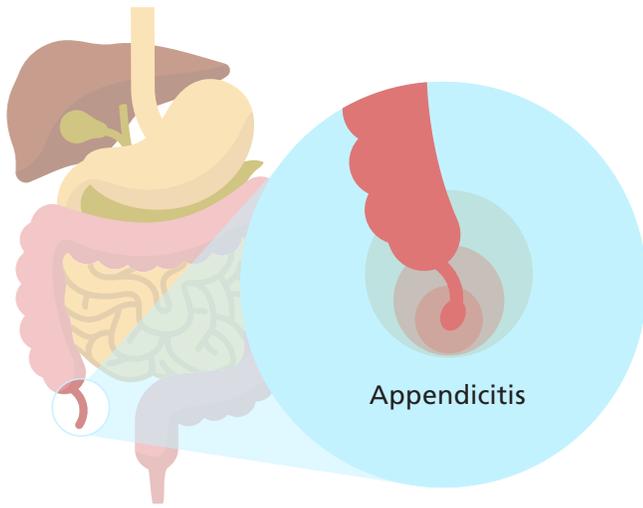
If you can't get an appointment with your child's healthcare provider, take your child to the emergency room.

How is appendicitis treated?

Your child will probably need an appendectomy (ap-en-DECK-toe-me), a surgery to remove the appendix. During an appendectomy:

- Your child will receive antibiotics through an IV (a small tube placed into a vein) before the surgery to stop the infection from spreading.
- A healthcare provider will give your child anesthesia so they are completely asleep and can't feel pain during the surgery.
- The surgeon usually removes the appendix in the operating room with laparoscopic (lap-ah-ruh-SCOPP-ick) surgery. This means they will make a few small openings in the belly to pull the appendix out.





When can my child go home?

Your child can go home when they are eating and drinking well and can take pain medicine by mouth.

If your child's appendix did not rupture they may stay in the hospital 1–2 days after surgery and will not need to take antibiotics when going home. If your child's appendix ruptured, they may need to stay in the hospital 3–7 days and get antibiotics through an IV. Once your child is ready to go home, a healthcare provider will test their blood to see if they need to take antibiotics by mouth at home.

What should I do when my child goes home?

- Keep the surgical site clean and dry for 48 hours after surgery. After 48 hours, your child can take a shower. Do not soak or submerge the surgical site in water for 7 days.
- Feed your child a normal diet, but avoid greasy foods for 3 days after leaving the hospital.
- Give your child acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and ibuprofen (Motrin®) if they have pain. Most children will not need prescription pain medicine, but their healthcare provider may prescribe it just in case.
- Follow the healthcare provider's instructions if your child has diarrhea or becomes constipated.
- Have your child avoid contact sports and heavy lifting for 2 weeks after surgery.
- Let your child go to school once they can sit and walk well and are not taking prescription pain medicine.
- Take your child to a follow-up appointment 2 weeks after they go home. The provider will make sure your child is healthy and test their blood if they went home on antibiotics. If you can't come to a follow-up, call your child's healthcare provider in 2 weeks to talk about how your child is recovering.

- Healthcare providers will watch your child carefully in the recovery room for an hour after surgery. When your child is stable and awake enough, they will be moved to a hospital room.

What happens in the hospital after my child's appendectomy?

- Healthcare providers will take your child's temperature, pulse, and blood pressure often. They will encourage your child to breathe deeply and walk around the day after surgery. This helps the intestine start working right again.
- Your child may get pain medicine, fluids, and antibiotics through their IV. As your child starts to eat more, they may take medicine by mouth.
- Your child can drink clear liquids by mouth after the surgery. If they don't feel nauseated or bloated and don't vomit, they can eat a normal diet. Nausea and vomiting are common. Your child may not be able to eat or drink by mouth until their intestines are working properly again.
- The surgical opening is covered with waterproof glue or paper tape and a sterile bandage on top. The outer bandage will be removed 2 days after surgery, and the tape and glue will fall off on their own within 10–14 days. A healthcare provider will teach you to care for your child's incision before you leave the hospital.

