

PS04lite Appendicectomy (child)

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This document will give you information about an appendicectomy. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

What is appendicitis?

Appendicitis means inflammation of the appendix (see figure 1). When the appendix is inflamed it causes pain and makes you feel unwell.

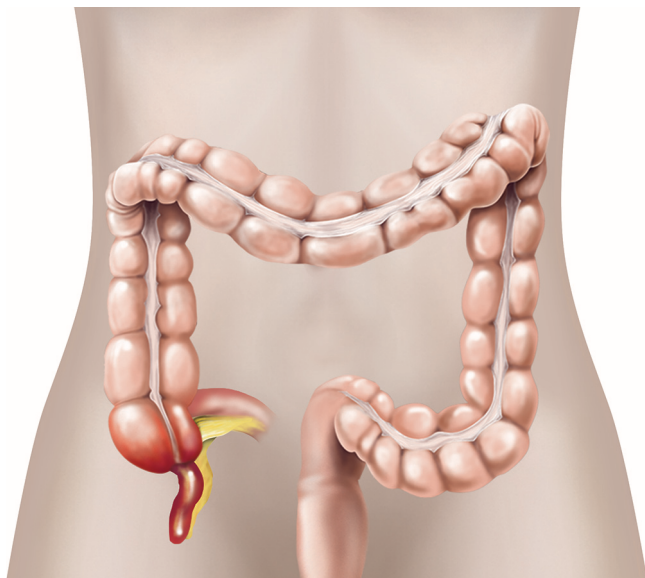


Figure 1
An inflamed appendix

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, there is no alternative to surgery. 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 three months later. If your child has an abscess, your surgeon may first need to perform an operation to remove the pus.

What does the operation involve?

The operation is performed under a general anaesthetic. The operation usually takes one to two hours.

Your surgeon will remove the appendix either by using laparoscopic (keyhole) surgery, or by open surgery, which is performed through a larger cut on the abdomen.

What complications can happen?

1 General complications

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Unsightly scarring

2 Specific complications

- Damage to structures such as the bowel, bladder or blood vessels
- Developing a hernia near one of the cuts
- Surgical emphysema
- Incorrect diagnosis
- Developing an abscess
- Continued bowel paralysis
- Developing a leak
- Bowel obstruction
- Spread of infection

How soon will my child recover?

Your child should be able to go home two to five 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 two weeks. Your child can return to normal activities as soon as they feel comfortable. This may take up to six weeks.

Summary

Appendicitis is where the appendix becomes inflamed. Surgery is the only dependable way to prevent the life-threatening risk of the appendix bursting.

Acknowledgements

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