

# Appendicitis

## Symptoms of appendicitis

Symptoms of appendicitis usually start with pain in the middle of your abdomen (tummy), around your belly button. After a few hours the pain usually moves to the lower right side of your abdomen, and gets worse.

- feeling or being sick, or loss of appetite
- a high temperature
- constipation or diarrhoea
- peeing more than usual
- sudden confusion (in older people)

## Recovering from appendicitis

Most people recover from appendicitis in 1 to 2 weeks. It may take longer if you had complications such as a burst appendix.

After surgery for appendicitis:

- you'll have some small wounds in your abdomen (tummy)
- you'll usually have stitches that dissolve so they do not need to be removed
- you may have some pain in your abdomen and around your wounds
- you may have constipation or diarrhoea for several days

## Recovering in hospital

After surgery for appendicitis, you'll spend some time in the recovery room, before moving to a ward. You'll be given medicine to help with pain.

How long you'll stay in hospital can vary. If you had keyhole surgery you may be able to go home the day after the operation. If you had open surgery, or any complications, you may need to stay in hospital for a few days.

You can go home when doctors think you're well enough. They'll usually want to check that you're eating and drinking, and you're able to poo.

You might be offered a follow-up appointment at the hospital or with a GP, but this is not always needed.

## Recovering at home

There are things you can do to help your recovery.

## Do

start going back to your usual activities when you feel ready – you may need to take 1 to 2 weeks off work or school, or sometimes longer depending on the type of work you do

take painkillers if you need them

follow advice you're given about caring for your wounds while they heal

be careful when washing or showering, and replace your dressings if they get wet

if you have [constipation](#), eat plenty of fibre and drink lots of fluids – you could also take a mild laxative (ask a pharmacist for advice)

if you're given [antibiotics](#), make sure you finish the whole course of treatment

contact the hospital ward where you had your treatment, or speak to a GP or practice nurse, if you need any advice about your recovery

## D

do not do strenuous activities such as sport until you've fully recovered – ask your doctor for advice

do not drive until you can use a car safely and comfortably, including doing an emergency stop

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## Possible complications of surgery for appendicitis

There's a chance of complications during or after surgery to remove your appendix (an appendectomy), but these are rare. Your doctor will explain the risks to you before the operation.

Complications can include:

- the wound becoming infected
- bleeding
- scar tissue forming (adhesions), which can cause a blockage in your bowel in rare cases
- an abscess forming where your appendix was removed
- appendicitis coming back in the small part of your appendix that was not removed (stump appendicitis)

You've recently had an appendectomy and you have:

- soreness or redness around your wound that's getting worse (redness may be less obvious on brown or black skin)
- bleeding or pus from your wound
- a high temperature

These could be signs of an infection.

You can call 111 or [get help from 111 online](#).

## Risks of a burst appendix

A burst appendix (also called a perforated or ruptured appendix) is a serious condition that can lead to complications such as:

- an infection of the inner lining of your abdomen ([peritonitis](#))
- a life-threatening reaction to infection ([sepsis](#))
- a painful build-up of pus (abscess)
- a blockage in your bowel
- problems in pregnancy

These complications will need to be treated urgently with surgery and antibiotics.

