

What happens after an appendectomy?

In the hospital

After surgery, you will be taken to the recovery room. Your healthcare team will watch your vital signs, such as your heart rate and breathing. Your recovery will depend on the type of surgery that was done and the type of anesthesia you had. Once your blood pressure, pulse, and breathing are stable and you are awake and alert, you will be taken to your hospital room.

A laparoscopic appendectomy may be done on an outpatient basis. In this case, you may be discharged and sent home from the recovery room.

You will have pain medicine as needed. This may be by prescription or from a nurse. Or you may give it to yourself through a device connected to your IV line.

You may have a thin plastic tube that goes through your nose into your stomach. This is used to remove stomach fluids and air that you swallow. The tube will be taken out when your bowels are working normally. You will not be able to eat or drink until the tube is removed.

You will be asked to get out of bed a few hours after a laparoscopic surgery or by the next day after an open surgery.

You may be allowed to drink liquids a few hours after surgery. You may slowly be able to add more solid foods.

You will schedule a follow-up visit with your healthcare provider. This is often 2 to 3 weeks after surgery.

At home

When you are home, you must keep the incision clean and dry. Your healthcare provider will give you instructions on how to bathe. Any stitches or surgical staples used will be removed at a follow-up office visit. If adhesive strips were used, they should be kept dry. They will often fall off in a few days.

The incision and your abdominal muscles may ache, often after long periods of standing. Take pain medicine as recommended by your healthcare provider. Aspirin or other pain medicines may raise your risk of bleeding. Only take medicines that your healthcare provider has approved.

If you had a laparoscopy, you may feel pain from the carbon dioxide gas that is still in your belly. This pain may last for a few days. You should feel a bit better each day.

Your healthcare provider will likely want you to walk and move around a bit. But don't do any tiring activity. Your healthcare provider will tell you when you can return to work and your normal activities.

Call your healthcare provider if you have any of the following:

Fever or chills

Redness, swelling, bleeding, or other drainage from the incision site

More pain around the incision site

Vomiting

Loss of appetite or inability to eat or drink anything

Constant coughing, trouble breathing, or shortness of breath

Belly pain, cramping, or swelling

No bowel movement for 2 days or longer

Watery diarrhea for more than 3 days