

## Advice following an appendicectomy (surgery to remove the appendix)

### Why did I need an appendicectomy?

Appendicectomy (surgical removal of the appendix) is usually done for cases of acute appendicitis (inflammation of the appendix), although it can also be done electively for other conditions of the appendix. It is commonly performed as a laparoscopic (keyhole) operation in adults, but can also be done via a cut in the lower right abdominal (tummy) wall and occasionally a cut in the middle of the abdomen is necessary. In very small children, laparoscopic surgery is not always possible, so an open approach may be preferable.

Appendicectomy is always performed under general anaesthesia (you are asleep) in the operating theatre. During the procedure, it may be necessary to pass a urinary catheter into your bladder to drain urine. This will make you more comfortable after the surgery, and give your surgeon a better view of the abdominal organs during the procedure. The catheter can usually be removed shortly after surgery. The duration of the surgery and post-operative recovery (and risks of complications) is dependent upon the severity of the appendicitis. Your surgeon will be able to advise you about your expected post operative course, including the need for antibiotics during your stay and to take home with you.

### Will I have pain after the operation?

While a degree of post-operative discomfort is to be expected, you should not experience severe pain after appendicectomy. Local anaesthetic is routinely injected into your surgical wounds during the operation, but you may nonetheless feel some discomfort, particularly on moving about. After keyhole surgery, it is not uncommon to feel shoulder tip pain, which is due to the carbon dioxide gas used in the abdominal cavity during the procedure. This should improve during the first 24 hours after your operation. You should be able to mobilise adequately with simple analgesia (paracetamol, ibuprofen) following your operation, but please let your medical team know if you require stronger painkillers.

Your discomfort is expected to improve in the days following surgery. If it is worsening, or you feel that your condition is not improving post-operatively, please seek medical attention.

### Caring for your wound

After your operation, you will return to the ward with showerproof dressings over the surgical incision sites. It is fine to have a shower with these dressings, but please avoid soaking in the bath or swimming sooner than 4 days post-operatively. After this time, you can remove your dressings and the skin should have superficially healed. Your wounds

will normally have been closed with absorbable sutures, so you should not need to have any stitches removed after your operation.

If you develop redness or worsening pain in the wound area, please seek medical attention, as this may indicate a wound infection.

### Eating and drinking following surgery

You may not feel like eating much post-operatively, particularly if you had a severe infection associated with appendicitis and you are still on antibiotics. You should be able to start drinking fluids soon after your surgery, but the timing for introduction of solid food will depend upon how you feel and how severe the appendicitis was.

Occasionally, the gut may take a few days to 'recover' after significant infection in the abdominal cavity – this is known as 'ileus'.

There are no specific dietary restrictions after appendicectomy but, in general, avoid large heavy meals which may make you feel nauseated. Some painkillers (codeine based) can cause constipation, so keep yourself well hydrated and mobilise as much as possible to avoid this.

### Driving

You should be able to drive when you are able to perform an emergency stop safely, and do not need painkillers other than paracetamol or ibuprofen. Please contact your motor insurance company to check their policy on driving after surgery if you are unsure.

### Return to work

You may well feel more tired than usual after your operation and it is normal to need 1-2 weeks to recuperate after surgery, even if it was done by a laparoscopic approach. Your return to work will depend upon the severity of your individual illness as well as your occupation. For example, if you have had an open operation and you have a manual occupation, you may be unable to return to your normal duties for up to 6 weeks after surgery. The hospital can provide you with a medical certificate for your employer before you leave hospital but any further certificates will need to be obtained from your GP.

### Things to look out for:

If you feel your condition is not improving/ worsening after your discharge, please seek medical attention via your GP or if you are really unwell go to your nearest Emergency Department (A&E).

Abnormal symptoms include: vomiting, persistent lower abdominal pain, fever, 'flu-like symptoms, wound swelling/ redness/ discharge.

These symptoms may indicate an infection, either in the wound or in the abdominal cavity, which may need treatment with antibiotics or further investigation/ interventions.

While you are in hospital, you will have been prescribed injections to prevent blood clots developing. Following your discharge, it is recommended that you keep as mobile as

possible to prevent blood clots developing. If you develop leg swelling or breathlessness, please seek medical attention straight away.

### Useful numbers

Adult Day Surgery Unit	0118 322 7622
Hunter Ward	0118 322 7535
Lister Ward	0118 322 7539
Pre-operative Assessment	0118 322 6546
Royal Berkshire Hospital	0118 322 5111
West Berkshire Community Hospital	01635 273300

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Review due: January 2021