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Appendectomy

What is an appendectomy and why is it necessary?

An appendectomy is the surgical removal of the appendix. It is the routine treatment for appendicitis, the swelling of the appendix due to inflammation. An appendectomy may be performed with an open incision or with laparoscopic instruments. During the procedure, the finger-like appendix is tied off, cut, and removed. If the appendectomy is performed laparoscopically, the surgeon will use slender instruments inserted through several small incisions.

Details of the procedure

What happens on the day of surgery?

You will report to a pre-operative nursing unit, where you will change into a hospital gown. A nurse will review your chart and confirm that all paperwork is in order. You will be taken to a pre-operative nursing unit where an anaesthesiologist will start an IV. Before any medications are administered, your surgeon will verify your name and the type of procedure you are having. You will then be taken to the operating room. After the appropriate form of anesthesia is administered, surgery will be performed.

What type of anesthesia will be used?

You will have a pre-operative interview with an anaesthesiologist who will ask you questions regarding your medical history. An appendectomy is performed under general anesthesia, which will keep you asleep during your surgery.

What happens during the surgery, and how is it performed?

If your surgery is performed laparoscopically, your surgeon will make three to four small incisions, and insert tube-like instruments through them. The abdomen will be filled with gas to help the surgeon view the abdominal cavity. A camera will be inserted through one of the tubes that will display images on a monitor in the operating room. In this manner, your surgeon will be able to work inside your abdomen without making a larger incision.

Your surgeon will perform the appendectomy with the laparoscopic method unless other factors require open surgery. If the appendectomy is performed with the open method, an incision is made at two-thirds of the distance between the belly button and the hip bone.

Once inside, your surgeon will cut out and remove the appendix. If the appendix has ruptured, the abdomen area will be flushed with warm saline, and the incision may not be closed completely but left open with packing to help prevent infection.

What happens after the surgery?

Once the surgery is completed, you will be taken to a post-operative or recovery unit where a nurse will monitor your progress. It is important that your bandages be kept clean and dry. Mild discomfort may occur at the incision site, so your surgeon may prescribe pain medication. You will be scheduled for a follow-up appointment within two weeks after your surgery.

How long will I be in the hospital?

Most patients are in the hospital from seven to ten days with an open appendectomy and four to five days after a laparoscopic appendectomy. You may need a ride home when discharged from the hospital.

What are the risks associated with an appendectomy?

As with any surgery, there are risks such as bleeding, infection, or an adverse reaction to anesthesia. Your surgeon will inform you of the risks prior to surgery. The risk of leaving appendicitis untreated is significantly greater than the surgical risk associated with the procedure.

What should I watch out for?

Be sure to call your doctor if any of the following symptoms appear:

- Fever
- Worsening pain
- Redness or swelling around the incision
- The incision is warm to the touch
- Drainage from the incision

Will there be scar(s)?

If the procedure is performed laparoscopically the incisions should heal well, leaving small discrete scars. If the open method is used, a larger scar will be present.

When can I expect to return to work and/or resume normal activities?

Light activity at home is encouraged after surgery. You can expect to return to normal activities, such as showering, driving, walking up stairs, light lifting, and work within a few days. If you are taking narcotic medications for pain, you should not drive.

Kindly make arrangements with the office of Dr WP de Beer to obtain a medical certificate (sick note), if required.

NB!!! IF THE WARD DID NOT BOOK A FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENT, PLEASE CALL THE ROOMS TO DO SO.