



## **APPENDECTOMY**

### **What is appendicitis?**

The appendix is a very small, narrow pouch attached to the intestine. Its purpose is not known. Food and stool can get trapped within this “pouch” and cause it to swell and become inflamed or infected. Occasionally other substances can obstruct this pouch and cause the same result. The appendix must be removed before it bursts or “perforates” and spreads the infection within the abdomen.

### **Who gets appendicitis?**

Appendicitis can occur at any age but is most common in children between the ages of 4 and 15 years.

### **How is appendicitis diagnosed?**

Children with appendicitis usually first complain of pain around their umbilicus (belly button) and do not want to eat. The pain gradually moves to the right lower part of the abdomen. There may be nausea, vomiting and a small amount of diarrhea. Some children have a fever but not always.

### **How is the decision made that surgery is needed?**

If the physical exam, blood tests and scans all point to an infection in the appendix, your doctor will usually recommend an operation to remove the appendix. In some cases, if the appendix has already “burst” it may be better to put a thin drain tube into the abdomen to remove the infected fluid and give your child antibiotics to treat the infection before we remove the remaining appendix.

### **When will my child be able to go home?**

Your child will be able to go home when they do not have a temperature over 101 F, are eating their regular diet and can take pain medicines by mouth. This is usually 1-2 days unless your child’s appendix perforated in which case s/he will be in the hospital for 5-7 days.

## **What care is needed at home after surgery?**

*Activity:* Your child may eat and drink as usual. Your child may return to school in 3-4 days after discharge, if you need a school excuse please let us know. No P.E., sports, bicycle riding or lifting more than 20 pounds until your child is seen for the postoperative check-up or postoperative phone call.

*Medications:* You will be given a prescription for pain medicine, if needed, or you may give your child Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or Ibuprofen (Motrin) for pain. If this does not relieve the pain call our office.

*Care of the incision:* The incision is covered by a bandage(steri-strips) or surgical glue. The stitches are under the skin and will not have to be removed. They will dissolve (melt) in 6-8weeks. If the steri-strips have not fallen off in 5-7 days, you may remove them.

*Bathing:* 2-3 days after surgery, your child may shower or have a shallow bath. Pat the incision dry if it gets wet. 7 days after surgery, your child may bathe as usual.

## **When should I call the surgery team?**

You should call the surgeon if your child has a temperature over 101 F, vomiting, diarrhea, increased or different abdominal pain or is not eating. You should also call if your child has an incision that looks red, swollen, or begins to drain fluid.

## **What are the long term consequences?**

There are no long term effects of having your appendix removed.

## **Will this affect growth and development?**

Your child may lose a small amount of weight before s/he feels like eating her/his usual diet and amounts. Your child should return to their previous weight soon and have no other effects.

## **When should my child return to surgery clinic?**

*Perforated appendicitis:* Your child's follow-up appointment will be in 2-4 weeks. You will be given your appointment when discharged or it will be mailed to you.

*Non-perforated appendicitis:* You will receive a follow-up phone call in 2-3 weeks. An appointment will be made as needed

\*\*\*\*\*

If you have any questions or problems, please call

Monday-Friday 8am – 4.30pm 501-364-4852 Surgery Specialty Nurses

After hours and weekends 501-364-1100 Ask for Surgeon On Call

\*\*\*\*\*

10/14/08 Pediatric Surgery Specialty Nurses  
Adapted from [www.apsna.org](http://www.apsna.org)