

## What are the possible risks?

Appendectomies (taking out an appendix) are one of the most commonly performed operations in the UK, and serious or long-term complications are rare.

However, like all types of surgery, there are some risks. **These include:**

- Infections of the wound
- Pus collections inside the abdomen can occur particularly after a burst appendix. This may mean your child needs to stay on antibiotics for longer than normal and may need further operations.
- Rarely, months or years after the operation, the intestine can stick together causing pain, vomiting and a swollen tummy.

## What should we do when we get home?

The hospital team will decide when your child is well enough to go home.

The vast majority of patients recover without any problems but if the following occur soon after your discharge, please consult a doctor:

- Fever
- Ongoing or worsening tummy pain
- Vomiting, especially if it is green
- Worsening redness or swelling of wounds

## Useful numbers

### Practice Plus

(Brighton walk-in centre / GP service)

0333 321 0946

Open every day from 8am to 8pm,  
including bank holidays.

[www.practiceplusbrightonstation.nhs.uk](http://www.practiceplusbrightonstation.nhs.uk)

For out of hours GP service or advice  
ring NHS 111

Royal Alexandra Children's Hospital

01273 696955

Children's Emergency Department

Ext. 2593

Level 8 Surgical ward

Ext. 2552

Please be aware that ward or CED staff  
will not be able to give you medical  
advice over the telephone.

This leaflet is intended for patients receiving care  
in Brighton & Hove or Haywards Heath



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## Appendicitis

Children's Emergency Department

## What is appendicitis?

Appendicitis is inflammation of the appendix.

The appendix is a tubular structure attached to the first part of the large intestine. It is usually located in the lower right side of the tummy.

Appendicitis can be caused by an infection or blockage of the appendix.

Appendicitis can be painful and worrying, and your child will probably need an operation, but it is likely that they will recover completely and won't have any problems afterwards.

## What are the most common signs and symptoms of appendicitis?

- Pain that starts near the belly button, then moves to the right side.
- Vomiting.
- Fever.

Young children are harder to diagnose as often they cannot explain their symptoms well and their symptoms may not seem like appendicitis.

In some cases, appendicitis is suspected but the symptoms are actually being caused by something else.

## How can the doctor be sure my child has appendicitis?

Appendicitis is usually diagnosed by a surgeon who will ask about the symptoms and examine your child. Your child may spend some time in hospital being watched because appendicitis and other causes of tummy pain become more obvious with time.

Your child may not need any tests other than an examination but it is not unusual to have blood tests, an ultrasound scan or an x-ray. These tests may help to find out if it is appendicitis or not.

## How is appendicitis treated?

Appendicitis is treated by taking out the appendix. This is done with surgery, under a general anaesthetic. This means that your child will be asleep during the operation.

Before surgery, your child may be given:

- Antibiotics, to lower the risk of infection
- Pain relief
- Intravenous fluids through a cannula. This is a small, flexible tube put into a vein so that fluid and medicine can be put straight into your child's bloodstream.

The operation can be performed through a small cut over the appendix or by key-hole surgery.

## How will we be prepared for surgery?

Your child will not be allowed anything to eat or drink.

The doctor will explain the operation to you and ask you to sign a written consent form. Please ask any questions you need to.

## What happens after surgery?

Your child will be given pain relief after the surgery. Once they are ready, they can start to drink a few sips of water and then slowly build up to food. This is usually started the next day but it depends on your child's condition.

Sometimes a temporary tube (urinary catheter) is placed in the bladder during the surgery to help protect it. Occasionally it is left in for a few days afterwards depending on your child's condition.

Your child will be given antibiotics. The length of time they will have to take antibiotics depends on how bad the inflammation of the appendix was and if there was infection outside the appendix.

The hospital stay is usually 2-5 days following surgery but can sometimes be longer.