

# Advice for patients after an operation to take out the appendix

## Children's Ward

### Patient Information Leaflet

#### Introduction

This leaflet is for young people who have had an operation to take out their appendix. It gives information on what you should do when you get home.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact a member of the Children's Ward.

#### What is the appendix?

The appendix is a small, thin pouch about five to 10cm long. It is connected to the large intestine, where stools (poo) are formed.

No one knows exactly why we have an appendix. Taking it out is not harmful.

## **Why have I had my appendix taken out?**

Your hospital doctor thinks you might have had appendicitis. This is where the appendix swells and causes pain. It was very important that your appendix was taken out quickly before it bursts, as this can be very dangerous.

The medical name for having your appendix out is appendicectomy.

## **Will I have pain after the operation?**

You will have some pain, depending on how bad the appendicitis was. This may continue for a week or two after the operation.

We will have given you medicine to get rid of the pain (painkillers) while you were having your operation. This is so that when you wake up, you should not feel any pain. We will also give you painkillers regularly when you get back to the Children's Ward.

When you get home, it is a good idea to have painkillers regularly, such as Calpol. You must always read the label on this medicine and not take more than it says on the label.

The pain should go away but if it gets worse, get your mum, dad or guardian to take you to your family doctor or the nearest Emergency Department.

## **What happens to my dressing?**

If you still have a dressing on your wound when you go home, you will need to keep it dry for three days. After this time, you can take it off. It is best to do this by soaking it in the shower or bath as this makes it easier to remove.

Do not use any perfumed products, like shower gel or soap, while you are having a bath or shower, until your wounds have completely healed.

## What happens about my wound?

Your wound may feel tingly, numb and itchy and may pull slightly around the stitches. This is quite normal and is part of the healing process.

If your wound becomes very red and swollen, or liquid or pus starts coming out of it, you should contact the Children's Ward or your family doctor.

You may have stitches which dissolve, stitches that need to be taken out or staples. The nurse will tell you which type you have before you leave hospital.

If you have stitches or staples that need to be taken out, we will give you a letter to give to the nurse at your family doctor practice. Your parent or carer can use this letter to make an appointment at your family doctor surgery to have the stitches or staples removed. This is normally between seven to 14 days after the operation.

Please note that if you have staples, you will need to make sure you have a staple remover and dressing given to you when you leave hospital. Take these to the nurse at your GP surgery when you have the staples taken out.

If you have dissolvable stitches, it is best not to soak in the bath for a long time. This will weaken the stitches which will mean your wound will take longer to heal.

## Will I be able to go to the toilet normally?

After you have your appendix taken out, sometimes your bowels (your intestines) may be paralysed for a while. This may cause constipation – where your poo does not come out for several days and is hard and lumpy.

Other people may have diarrhoea (runny, watery poo) after the operation, particularly if you had a burst appendix.

It is best to try and avoid getting constipation by:

- eating healthy foods with lots of fruit and vegetables
- having plenty of drinks
- taking regular but gentle exercise, like walking

You may not feel hungry for a while after your operation, but over the next few weeks, your appetite should come back.

## **When can I go back to school?**

You will need to take at least one week off school. You should wait until you have had your wound checked by the nurse at your family doctor surgery.

## **Can I do normal activities?**

You should only do gentle activities for the first two weeks after your operation. You will need to build up to normal levels of activity over the next four to six weeks. During this time avoid:

- stretching
- carrying or lifting heavy objects, including heavy school bags

## **What happens if I become ill?**

If you have any of the following during the next few weeks:

- High temperature
- Pain in your stomach area
- Are sick

Get advice from your family doctor or the Children's Ward. The number of the Children's Ward is:

**01384 244271**

Even if your wound looks fine, these things could mean that you have infection. If you have an infection, you may have to take antibiotics to get rid of it. Antibiotics are medicines that kill bacteria.

## **How long will it take me to get better?**

Everyone recovers differently after surgery and it is normal to feel tired and weak for several days. If you are worried, or these feelings last for a long time, please contact your family doctor.

## Will I need to see the hospital doctor again?

If your hospital doctor needs to see you again after your operation, we will send you an appointment through the post. This is usually two or three months after your operation.

## Can I find out more?

The NHS Choices website has more information on taking out the appendix:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Appendicitis/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Children's Ward on 01384 244271

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

**This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:**

<http://dudleygroup.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/paediatrics-and-neonatology/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email [patient.information@dgh.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@dgh.nhs.uk)

**This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.**

للحصول على هذه النشرة بحجم أكبر، وعلى شكل إصدار صوتي و بلغات أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال بالرقم 08000730510.

此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

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Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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