



EMERGENCY  
*Appendectomy*  
SURGERY

P A T I E N T   G U I D E

**ERAS**

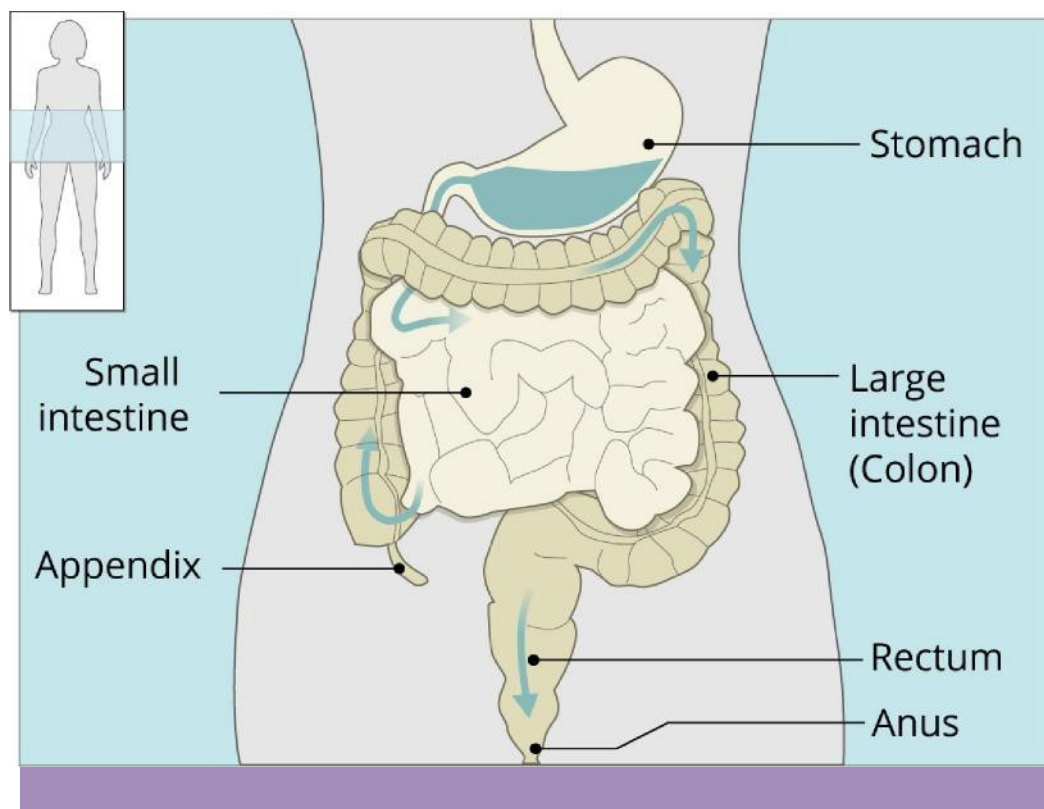
Enhanced Recovery After Surgery Program



**CHRISTUS<sup>®</sup>  
ST. MICHAEL**  
Health System

# RECOVERING AFTER EMERGENCY *Appendectomy* SURGERY

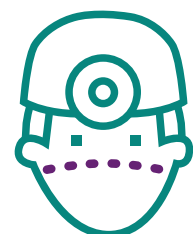
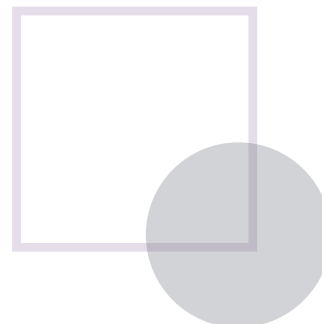
Emergency surgery is stressful. And while you couldn't plan for it, knowing what to expect and what to do at home will help you ask better questions and give you a sense of control. To understand what happened, take a look at the belly area.



Food is broken down in your stomach. From there, it moves into your small intestine, where nutrients are absorbed. Next, it moves into your colon (large intestine). The colon absorbs water, and the leftover waste becomes feces (poop).

At the beginning of the colon is a little finger-shaped pouch called the appendix [uh-PEN-diks]. There are different ideas about exactly what the appendix does such as infection control in your GI tract or aiding in digestion somehow, but ultimately you can live a long healthy life without your appendix.

At the end of the colon is the rectum [REK-tuhm]. The rectum pushes feces (poop) out through an opening called the anus [AY-nuhs].



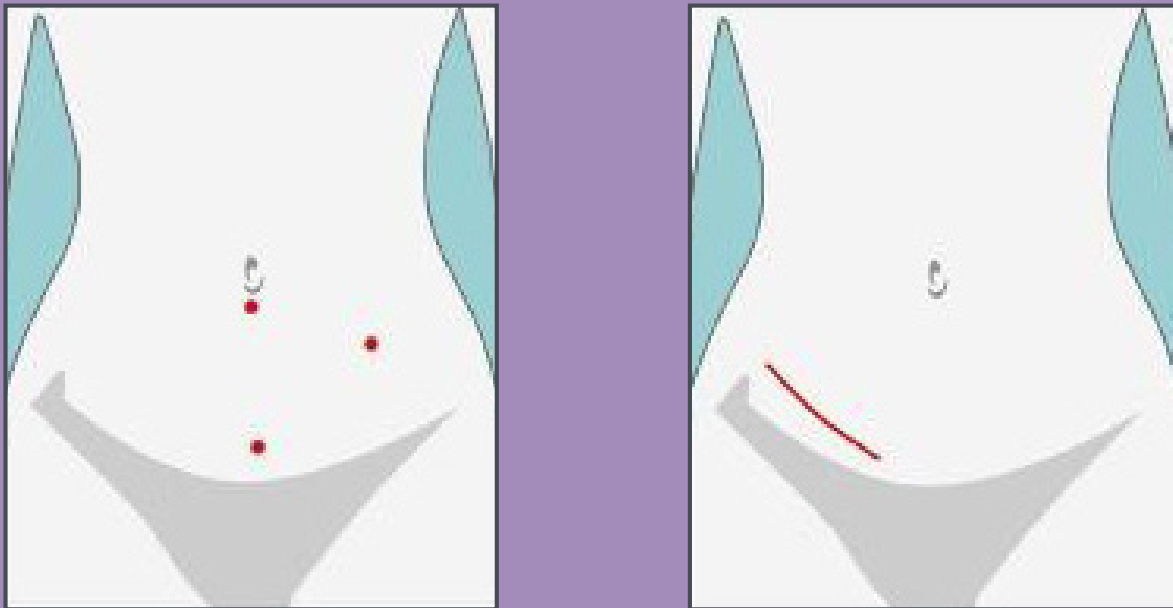
# When is the appendix removed?

The appendix can become infected. This is called: **appendicitis** [uh-PEN-duh-SAHY-tis].

People often have pain near their belly button, feel sick to their stomach, throw up, and they may have diarrhea or constipation (when it's difficult or painful to poop).

This is a medical emergency because the appendix can burst. This can lead to serious infections in the belly (called: peritonitis) or an infection in the blood (called: sepsis). So, surgery is done to try and remove the appendix before it bursts.

Sometimes, your surgeon may not take your appendix out immediately because there may be other treatments that will be more appropriate for you at this time.



**A few small openings may be made.  
Sometimes, one larger incision is made.**

*The illustrations above are examples of where incisions may be made for an appendectomy. Depending on the patient, there may be more or fewer incisions, which may be on different locations on the abdomen.*

## Caring for your surgical wounds

- There may be small strips of medical tape (Steri-Strips™) or surgical glue on the wounds.
- **DO NOT** pick at any surgical tape or glue. Over time, these will come off on their own.
- If you have surgical staples, these will be removed at your follow-up appointment.

# Showering

- Gently wash the wound with soap and water.
- Use a clean towel to gently pat the area dry.
- **DO NOT** sit in water (like a bathtub or hot tub).
- And **DO NOT** go in a pool, lake, or ocean until your physician says it's OK.

Water can get into the wounds and cause new infections.

# Eating and drinking

- Ask your physician if you should avoid any foods.
- Drink a lot of water.
- Avoid drinks with caffeine or bubbles, like coffee and soda.

# Pain relief

For most people, acetaminophen (Tylenol™) and ibuprofen (Advil®) are strong enough to manage any pain.

## Opioid [OH-pee-oid] pain medications

These are strong medications like morphine, oxycodone (Oxycontin®, Percocet®, Vicodin®, Norco®, Dilaudid®) and others.

**Only take opioids if you really need them because:**

- They can be addictive.
- They can cause constipation.
- They can make you feel sick to your stomach.

For your safety and the safety of others, do NOT drive, swim, operate machines, watch children, or drink alcohol when taking opioids.

# Activity, work and school

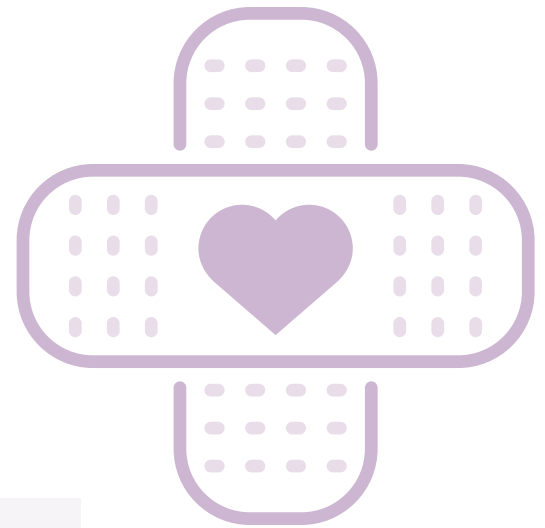
- Walk as much as you can.
- It's OK to go up and down stairs.

**Ask your physician when it's OK to do anything that could cause strain like:**

- Lifting anything heavy (like a big bag of groceries or a child)
- Activities like: vacuuming, lawn work, laundry, sports, or sex

**Ask when you can drive or go back to work or school.**

- It depends on your job and how your surgery went.
- Ask your employer if there are any rules about when you can return to work.
- If you need a return-to-work form or short-term disability papers, we can help you fill these out before you go home.

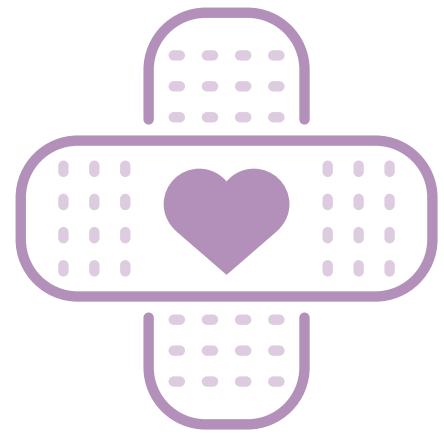


# When to call

Call us if you are worried or have a question.

## Call **RIGHT AWAY**:

- If you have a fever of 101.5 F degrees or higher
- If you get the chills or you're sweating a lot
- If you feel sick to your stomach or you throw up
- If you have any new pain or if your pain is worse
- If fluid or pus comes out of your surgical wound
- If the area around any surgical wounds becomes red
- If you can't urinate (pee) or can't empty your bladder



Call early if you think something is wrong. Don't wait!

 **911**  
**EMERGENCY**

### **CALL 911 OR GO TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM:**

- If you have chest pain
- If you are short of breath or have trouble breathing
- If you have any other severe problems

**HAVE THE EMERGENCY TEAM CALL US ONCE YOU ARE STABLE.**



**YOU CAN TEAR THIS SHEET OUT AND PUT IT ON YOUR REFRIGERATOR**





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