Appendectomy: Simple Appendicitis

Your child has had an appendectomy (ap pen DECK toe mee). This is the surgical removal of the appendix. The appendix is a small, narrow sac at the beginning of the large intestine (Picture 1). The appendix has no known function.

What to Expect After Surgery

- Your child will awaken in the Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) near the surgery area. He or she may be in the PACU for 1 to 2 hours.
- After your child wakes up in the PACU, he or she will return to a hospital room or be transferred to the Surgery Unit. Discharge will be directly from the Surgery Unit.
- Your child will have 3 to 4 small incision sites (see Helping Hand HH-I-283, Laparoscopic Surgery).
- Your child will receive fluids and pain medicine through an intravenous line (IV). When your child can take liquids by mouth, pain medicine will also be given by mouth.
- Your child will need to cough and deep-breathe often to help keep the lungs clear. He or she may use a plastic device called an incentive spirometer to help with this.
- Your child will need to get up and walk soon after surgery. Walking will help "wake up" the bowels; it will also help with breathing and blood flow.
- Your child will be able to go home on the same day of the surgery if he or she is:
  - able to drink clear liquids like water, clear soft drinks, broth, and fruit punch
  - taking pain medicine by mouth and his or her pain is controlled, and
  - able to walk.
Diet

- Your child will be allowed to have clear liquids such as water, popsicles, clear soft drinks, fruit punch, gelatin, or broth after discharge from the PACU.
- Your child does not need to eat solid food right away after surgery. However, if he or she is hungry, a regular diet is allowed. We recommend starting with something bland, like crackers, until you know if solid food will cause nausea or vomiting.

Care of the Incision

- Your child will have 3 to 4 small incisions. The incision near the belly button may have gauze and tape dressing. The gauze should be removed 2 days after surgery.
- If there are small strips of white tape (SteriStrips™), by themselves or with a clear dressing (Opsite™) over the incisions, leave them in place. They will fall off on their own in 1 to 2 weeks. Do not remove them unless your child’s doctor says it is okay.
- If your child has glue (Dermabond®) over the incisions, it will fall off on its own. Do not remove it.
- Your child may take a shower or a sponge bath. Dry incision sites well after the shower or sponge bath. Do not allow tub baths or swimming until 1 week after surgery.

Activity

- Your child may begin normal activities one week after surgery except for weight lifting (lifting more than 10 pounds) and competitive sports. He or she can begin weight lifting and competitive sports 3 weeks after surgery.
- Your child may return to school 1 to 2 days after surgery and when no longer taking narcotics, such as Oxycodone or Lortab, for pain control.

When to Call the Doctor after Going Home

Call your child's doctor if:

- An incision becomes red.
- There is drainage or blood around an incision.
- An incision becomes more tender or swollen.
- An incision begins to separate (pull apart).
- Your child throws up more than once.

Continued on Page 3
When to Call the Doctor after Going Home, continued

- Your child has fever over 101°F by mouth or 102°F rectally.
- Your child’s stomach becomes distended (full and firm) or he or she acts as if it is painful.
- Your child cannot have a bowel movement.
- Your child’s pain is not controlled by the medicine the doctor told you to give.

Follow-Up

A clinic nurse will call you for follow-up after a few weeks.

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your child’s doctor or nurse or call 614-722-3900.