

COLORECTAL SURGERY

6 signs you have appendicitis

Appendicitis is a medical emergency that requires prompt surgery. Here's how you can identify the problem to seek timely intervention.



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The appendix is about 3.5 inches long and extends from the lower-right side of the large intestine. Although its function is not fully understood, it can get inflamed and cause severe pain and infection that requires surgery.

Inflammation occurs due to two reasons:

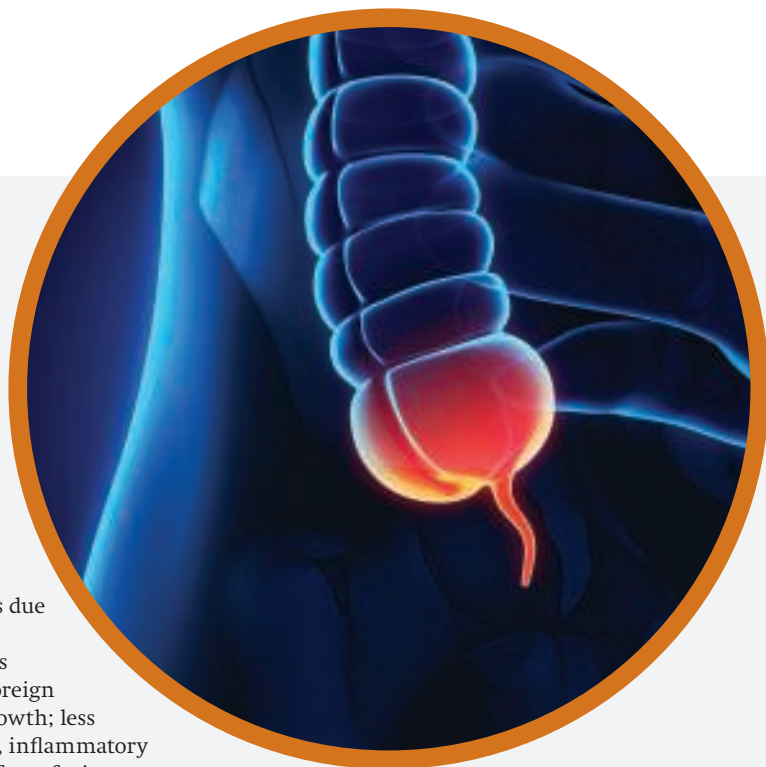
- When the appendix is blocked (by stool, a foreign body or cancerous growth; less commonly by worms, inflammatory bowel disease, seeds from fruits or vegetables)
- In reaction to an infection going on elsewhere in the body

Left untreated, an inflamed appendix can eventually burst and release infectious tissue into the abdominal cavity. This can then cause a serious inflammation of the peritoneum (the lining of the abdominal cavity). Peritonitis is fatal unless it is treated quickly with strong antibiotics and surgery.

In some cases, an abscess will form over the inflamed appendix. This pus-filled growth will cause scar tissues to form. Although this creates a barrier between the infected appendix and the abdomen — thus preventing the infection from spreading — the abscess and inflamed appendix are serious conditions. Due to the risk of peritonitis, all cases of appendicitis are treated as emergencies and benefit from quick diagnosis and prompt surgery.



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Symptoms

If you suspect that you have appendicitis, do not to eat or drink — in case you need emergency surgery; neither should you use any pain remedies, antacids, laxatives or heating pads — these can mask symptoms until the inflamed appendix ruptures! Here are the six classic signs of appendicitis:

- 1 A dull pain near the navel or the upper abdomen that grows sharper towards the lower right area of the abdomen
- 2 A fever with temperatures between 37 and 39°Celsius
- 3 Nausea or vomiting after the onset of abdominal pain
- 4 Loss of appetite
- 5 Swelling of the stomach and/or feeling bloated
- 6 Inability to pass gas

If you experience any of these, seek medical attention as soon as possible.

Less common symptoms include:

- Pain in the back or buttock region
- Painful urination
- Vomiting and/or nausea before abdominal pain strikes
- Severe stomach cramps
- Unusual changes in bowel movement (sudden constipation or diarrhoea with gas)

Risk, prevention and cure

There is no known prevention for appendicitis, although some studies indicate that people who eat a diet high in fruit, vegetables and fibre have a lower risk of the condition. The key is really to recognise the symptoms and seek early medical attention.