Appendicitis

This fact sheet is for people who have presented to the emergency department with this condition.

This fact sheet provides general information. If you have specific concerns, speak to your healthcare professional for further information and advice.

What is appendicitis?

The appendix is about 5-10cm long and comes off the first part of the large bowel. Appendicitis is an infection of the appendix. Research suggests that the appendix helps with immunity and gut health but removing it does not cause health problems.

Symptoms

Early appendicitis can sometimes be difficult to diagnose. Not everyone has typical symptoms. Some people develop pain that is like appendicitis, but it is caused by other conditions.

Your doctor may have determined it is unlikely that you have appendicitis. It is not always possible to be 100% certain as your symptoms may change and there is no easy, foolproof test that can confirm appendicitis.

Home care

In the next 24 hours it is important to:

- rest by avoiding physical activities or strenuous activities
- drink plenty of water and eat your normal diet
- ensure there is someone around to keep an eye on you
- avoid travel, especially if it involves long travel times or remote locations
- take simple pain killers such as paracetamol, if you need them.

What to expect

We expect that your symptoms will settle by themselves. But it is important to observe the advice above and seek help if you are concerned. Seek medical attention if you have:

- ongoing pain that does not settle or gets worse
- ongoing vomiting or watery diarrhoea
- a high temperature
- loss of appetite
- a ‘lightheaded’ feeling or can’t keep hydrated.

If your condition is not improving, take action.