

or complicated the appendicitis is will impact upon the child's length of stay. Children with mild appendicitis will only be in hospital for a few days. Children with more severe appendicitis can be in the hospital on IV antibiotics for at least five days. Over the next number of days the child will be encouraged to get out of bed and return to a normal diet as quickly as possible. As soon as they are well they will be discharged home, however in those children with more complicated or inflamed appendix they will stay for a minimum of five days and recovery can take longer than that. Surgeons and nurses will be assessing your child on a regular basis. If any questions or concerns arise please feel free to ask them.

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Your child and appendicitis

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Information
for parents

This leaflet is designed to help parents when their child has come into hospital with a possible diagnosis of appendicitis.

What is appendicitis?

Appendicitis is an inflammation of the appendix, which is a small structure which contains a piece of bowel and lies in the right hand side of the abdomen. It has no useful or functional benefits in humans but occasionally it can get blocked or inflamed and cause appendicitis.

What are the symptoms?

Appendicitis can present in children with pain, sometimes around the belly button which then moves to right hand side. Children can also have high temperatures, they can vomit and they can be off their fluid. The other symptoms can include pain on passing urine, pain in the pelvis and generally feeling unwell with high temperatures, constipation and lower abdominal pain for a number of days.

How easy is appendicitis to diagnose?

When your child attends the casualty department they will be evaluated by a number of doctors to see whether or not a diagnosis of possible appendicitis can be made. This can be quite challenging as it's one of the most difficult diagnoses to make in children and in adults. The vast majority of children who present with abdominal pain do not have appendicitis and unfortunately there are no quick and easy tests that can distinguish appendicitis from the causes of your child's pain and discomfort. Your child will be evaluated by a surgeon and regular blood and urine tests will be performed to try to determine the diagnosis. Parents frequently ask and wonder whether a scan will be beneficial and the majority of times ultrasounds, scans or x-rays of tummy are of very limited benefit in diagnosing appendicitis. In reality the most useful thing is repeated

investigations and assessments by the surgeon. Your child will be admitted and then reviewed on a number of occasions, and will be given IV fluids through a drip and pain relief. All the appropriate care will be provided until we can clearly diagnose what is going on.

What if my child is diagnosed with appendicitis?

Once the diagnosis of appendicitis is made it may mean that your child will require an operation. Once the diagnosis of appendicitis is made your child will require an appendectomy. Although this is an urgent operation, it does not need to happen immediately. It is much more important that your child is treated with antibiotics and given fluids through a drip which will enable them to feel a lot better. The antibiotics and the fluids are actually very successful treatments for appendicitis and this way they have the best possible chance of recovering faster and being discharged quickly following surgery. Sometimes there can be a perceived delay from the time of diagnosis to the time of surgery, but as long as your child has been treated with antibiotics and the fluids, this is all part of the normal treatment plan.

What does the operation involve?

Your child will go to theatre and have the appendectomy. This is always a time of stress and anxiety for parents but please be assured the operation is being performed by skilled surgeons, anaesthetists and surgical team who are experts in this procedure. We are children surgeons, and our nursing staff are dedicated to looking after children. The majority of children who do have an appendectomy now have it through a key hole technique which involves using a laparoscope or small camera which is inserted into the abdomen. With some children it is better that it is done open.

What happens after the surgery?

Afterwards your child will require pain relief fluids through a drip, and will need more antibiotics. Depending on how inflamed or