For patients going home after surgery

Read this resource to learn about:

- How to take care of yourself at home
- How to cope with pain
- Problems to watch for
- How to make your follow-up appointment

Do not drive a car or drink alcohol for 24 hours.
What is a laparoscopic or open appendectomy?

Your surgeon has removed your appendix. You will have 4 small incisions (cuts) or one large incision after your surgery.
What can I eat and drink after my surgery

For the first day have clear fluids, like apple juice, ginger ale, clear tea and broth.

The next day you can slowly go back to eating your usual meals.

If you are vomiting or feel nauseous (sick to your stomach), you can take anti-nausea medication, such as Gravol®. You can buy it from your pharmacy without a prescription. Always follow the instructions on the package and keep drinking fluids (such as water) until the nausea stops. Then you can slowly return to eating your usual meals.

How much activity is safe?

Go home and rest today.

You will be walking within hours of your surgery, so keep taking short walks at home for the first day. For example, you can try walking to the bathroom, kitchen or bedroom.

For the next 4 to 6 weeks:

- Do not lift anything over than 10 pounds (5 kilograms) such as groceries, small children or pets.

- Do not try strenuous or tiring activities such as sports, gardening, jogging, golfing, skiing, swimming or shoveling snow.

When can I return to work and sports?

Your surgeon will tell you when it is safe to go back to work and sports.
How do I take care of my bandage (dressing) and wound?

Bandage care

• You will have 3 or 4 small incisions (cuts) in your belly after surgery. A gauze bandage and small tapes called steri-strips will cover all of them.
• Remove the bandage from all your wounds 2 days after your surgery.
• Do not replace the bandages with new ones.
• Do not remove the steri-strips. The strips should remain in place for 7 to 10 days. Then you can remove them. If they begin to peel off before the 7 days, this is OK. Remove the ones that are coming loose and throw them away.

Wound care

• Always keep your wounds clean and dry.
• It is normal for the wounds to ooze a small amount of fluid (blood mixed with a clear fluid). There should be less and less fluid over time. If the oozing continues, cover the wounds with a small Band-Aid.
• After the 7 days you do not have to cover the wounds, but always keep the area clean.

When can I shower or take a bath?

• You can shower 2 days after your surgery.
• Take your shower after you have removed your bandage. Remember to leave your steri-strips in place.
• After you have showered, pat the wounds dry with a clean towel. Do not rub the wounds.
• Keep the wounds clean and dry at all times.
• Do not take a bath or swim for 4 weeks.
**How do I cope with my pain?**

It is normal to have pain after your surgery. You should have less and less pain every day.

You may have pain in your shoulders after your surgery. Shoulder pain happens because of the gas we used in your abdomen (belly) during surgery. Walking around should help to get rid of the pain.

We will give you a prescription for pain before you go home form the hospital. It is important that you take your pain medication before the pain gets bad. Take the prescription to a pharmacy and have it filled before you go home. Always follow the instructions for taking the medication.

As you start to feel better, take less and less pain medication until you do not need any at all. Or, change your medication to Tylenol® Extra Strength and take it when you need to. Follow the instructions on the bottle.

Do not drink alcohol or drive while taking your pain medications. They may cause drowsiness.

**When can I take my usual medications again?**

If you have not taken your usual daily medication, take it as soon as you get home.

Do not take Aspirin (ASA) or products with ASA unless your surgeon has told you it is OK. If you take Aspirin every day, ask your surgeon when to start taking it again.

**What if I am constipated?**

**Pain medication can make you constipated.** Your surgeon may give you a prescription for a stool softener. Fill the prescription at your local pharmacy and take it as directed to avoid constipation.
If your surgeon did not give you a prescription to prevent constipation:

- Drink about 3 to 5 glasses of water a day (each glass should be 8 ounces).
- Eat food that is high in fibre such as fruit, vegetables and bran.
- If you have not had a bowel movement after 3 days, take Milk of Magnesia as directed on the bottle. You can buy it from the pharmacy without a prescription.

**Problems to watch for**

Call your surgeon, family doctor or come to the Toronto Western Hospital Emergency department if any of the problems below happen to you.

If you are from out of town, go to the nearest emergency department.

- Severe pain that does not go away after you take the pain medication
- A fever (temperature higher than than 38 °C or 100 °F)
- Redness, pain and thick yellowish-green pus coming from the wounds
- Bleeding that does not stop after you apply pressure for 15 minutes
- Vomiting that does not get better after taking Gravol® (anti-nausea medication)
- You cannot urinate (pee) after 10 to 12 hours and you have a bloated feeling in your lower stomach
- Your belly becomes hard and you have a lot of pain
Follow-up appointment

Please call your surgeon’s office to make a follow-up appointment. Bring your health card (OHIP) with you to all your hospital visits.

☐ Dr Jackson 416-603-5599
☐ Dr Okrainec 416-603-5224
☐ Dr Penner 416-603-6220
☐ Dr Quereshy 416-603-5553

Date: ______________________________________________________________

Time: ______________________________________________________________

Special instructions for you

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For more information visit our website:
www.uhn.ca or www.uhnpatienteducation.ca