



# SEPSIS AND APPENDICITIS

It used to be that almost everyone had their appendix removed at some point during their childhood. Now however, the surgery isn't as common and many adults still have their appendix.

Appendicitis is the inflammation of the appendix, a small organ attached to the large intestine. In the past, doctors thought that the appendix didn't have any function, but now they aren't sure. Since we can live without our appendix, if it becomes infected, it is removed by surgery, called an appendectomy.

Your appendix can become inflamed for a number of reasons. It can be blocked by mucus, stool (bowel movement), or lymphatic tissue, part of the lymphatic system that helps fight infection. The normally harmless bacteria that is in the appendix then begins to attack the appendix walls, resulting in inflammation and infection. If left untreated, this can rupture the appendix wall, causing the infection to spread in the abdomen and, possibly throughout the body, resulting in sepsis or severe sepsis.

Sometimes called blood poisoning, sepsis is the body's often deadly response to infection or injury. Sepsis kills and disables millions and requires early suspicion and rapid treatment for survival.

Worldwide, one-third of people who develop sepsis die. Many who do survive are left with life-changing effects, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), chronic pain and fatigue, and organ dysfunction (organs don't work properly) and/or amputations.

Sepsis may also occur as a complication of the surgery in general, if an infection develops.

## **SYMPTOMS**

Appendicitis symptoms are not always obvious at first and the inflammation may have been developing for up to 48 hours before they are noticed. Because of this, it is important to seek medical help when the symptoms do appear. While everyone is different, the usual signs and symptoms of appendicitis include:

### **Early Symptoms**

- Constipation, diarrhea, or gas
- Dull, achy pain beginning around the belly button (navel), turning to sharp pain in the lower portion of the abdomen
- Loss of appetite
- Low fever
- Nausea and vomiting
- Rebound tenderness: tenderness when pressure applied to the lower right abdomen is released

## More Advanced Symptoms

- Abdomen swelling and rigidity (hard)
- Pain on the right side of the abdomen when pressed on the left side

## TREATMENT

Generally, the treatment for appendicitis is surgery to remove the appendix. If there is infection, you may need to take antibiotics. There are some studies showing that sometimes appendicitis can be successfully treated with antibiotics. Each case must be determined on an individual basis.

## AFTER SURGERY

To reduce the risk of developing sepsis after surgery, it's important to watch for signs of infection at the surgical incision. Speak with your doctor if you have:

- Increased pain
- Redness around the incision area
- Pus or discharge coming from the wound
- Fever

## WHAT IS SEPSIS?

SEPSIS is the body's overwhelming and life-threatening response to infection, which can lead to tissue damage, organ failure, and death.

### What are the signs and symptoms of sepsis?

Sepsis is a toxic response to an infection. There is no single sign or symptom of sepsis. It is, rather, a combination of symptoms. Symptoms can include ANY of the following:

- T** **Temperature:** Higher or lower than normal
- I** **Infection:** May have signs and symptoms of an infection
- M** **Mental Decline:** Confused, sleepy, difficult to rouse
- E** **Extremely Ill:** Severe pain, discomfort, shortness of breath

**SEPSIS IS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY. IF YOU SUSPECT SEPSIS, CALL 9-1-1 OR GO TO A HOSPITAL RIGHT AWAY.**

**To learn more about sepsis, or to read tributes and survivor stories, visit us online at [Sepsis.org](https://www.sepsis.org)**

