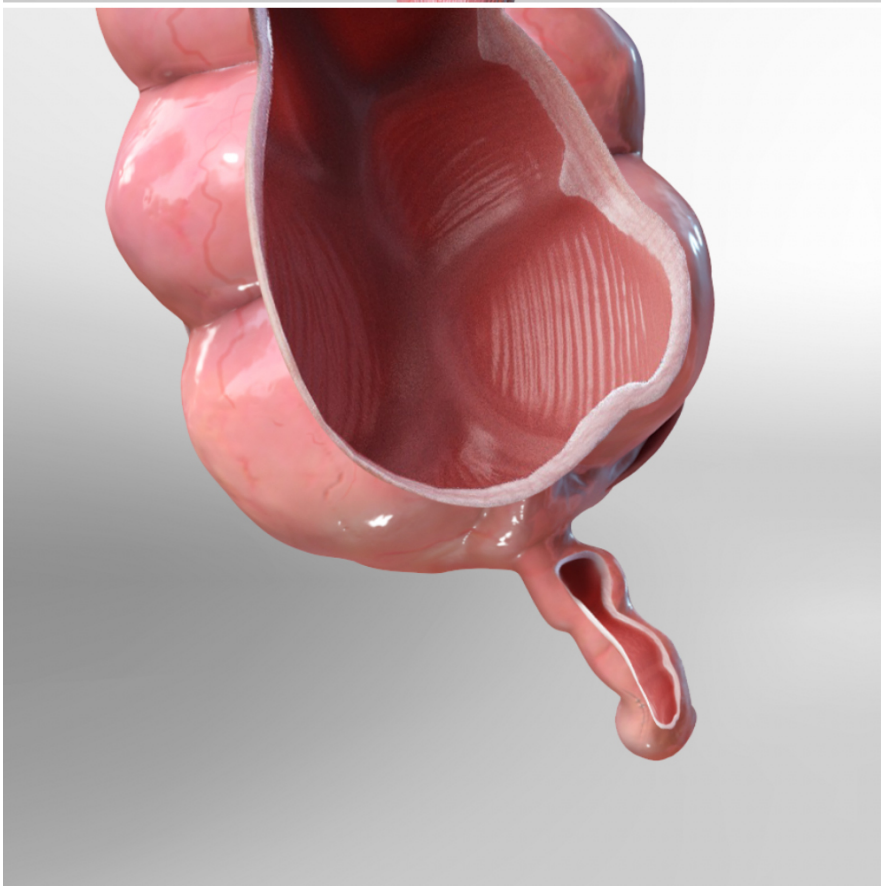




What Does the Appendix Do?



Overview

Your appendix is a small, tube-like organ attached to your large intestine. It's on the lower right side of your abdomen. But what does it do, exactly? Let's take a moment to learn about this mysterious structure.

Healthy appendix

A healthy appendix is a finger-like tube with a closed end. The open end connects to the first part of your large intestine.

The role of the appendix

In the past, doctors didn't think the appendix did much for us. Some thought it served a role way back in our evolutionary history, then became a useless leftover. But today, we think the appendix may store good bacteria. It may keep the levels of bacteria in your gut stable. Your appendix may also support your immune system. We still don't fully understand this tiny organ. More research is needed.

Treating the appendix

Sometimes, the appendix gets infected. When this happens, it swells and causes a lot of pain. This is called "appendicitis." Your appendix may swell so large that it bursts. This is a medical emergency. To treat a swollen or burst appendix, we remove it with surgery. You can live a normal life without it. For more info, talk to your doctor.