

[Home](#) > [Types of Cancer](#) > [Appendix Cancer](#) > Appendix Cancer - Diagnosis

PDF generated on July 31, 2016 from <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/appendix-cancer/diagnosis>

Appendix Cancer - Diagnosis [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board \[2\]](#), 04/2016

ON THIS PAGE: You will find a list of common tests, procedures, and scans that doctors use to find the cause of the medical problem. To see other pages, use the menu.

Doctors use many tests to find, or diagnose, cancer. They also do tests to learn if cancer has spread to another part of the body from where it started. If this happens, it is called metastasis. For example, imaging tests can show if the cancer has spread. Imaging tests show pictures of the inside of the body. Doctors may also do tests to learn which treatments could work best.

For most types of cancer, a biopsy is the only sure way for the doctor to know whether an area of the body has cancer. In a biopsy, the doctor takes a small sample of tissue for testing in a laboratory. If a biopsy is not possible, the doctor may suggest other tests that will help make a diagnosis.

This list describes options for diagnosing this type of cancer, and not all tests listed will be used for every person. Your doctor may consider these factors when choosing a diagnostic test:

- The type of cancer suspected
- Your signs and symptoms
- Your age and medical condition
- The results of earlier medical tests

In addition to a physical exam, the following tests may be used to diagnose appendix cancer:

- **Biopsy.** A [biopsy](#) [3] is the removal of a small amount of tissue for examination under a microscope. Other tests can suggest that cancer is present, but only a biopsy can make a definite diagnosis. A pathologist then analyzes the sample(s). A pathologist is a doctor who specializes in interpreting laboratory tests and evaluating cells, tissues, and organs to diagnose disease.

However, most often, appendix cancer is found unexpectedly during or after abdominal surgery for another reason. If cancer is suspected at the time of surgery, the doctor will remove a portion of the colon and surrounding tissue (called a margin) for examination. Often, a patient will have an appendectomy, which is the surgical removal of the appendix. This is usually done for what is first thought to be appendicitis, and the cancer is diagnosed after the pathologist has processed and reviewed the tissue under the microscope. In that case, another surgery may be recommended to remove another margin of tissue around the area where the tumor began, depending on the type and size of tumor, if it is a carcinoid tumor.

- **Computed tomography (CT or CAT) scan.** A [CT scan](#) [4] creates a 3-dimensional picture of the inside of the body using x-rays taken from different angles. A computer then combines these images into a detailed, cross-sectional view that shows any abnormalities or tumors. A CT scan can also be used to measure the tumor's size. Sometimes, a special dye called a contrast medium is given before the scan to provide better detail on the image. This dye can be injected into a patient's vein or given as a pill to swallow.
- **Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).** An [MRI](#) [5] uses magnetic fields, not x-rays, to produce detailed images of the body. A special dye called a contrast medium is given before the scan to create a clearer picture. This dye can be injected into a patient's vein or given as a pill to swallow.
- **Ultrasound.** An [ultrasound](#) [6] uses sound waves to create a picture of the internal organs.
- **Radionuclide scanning (OctreoScan).** This test is used for carcinoid tumors and not other types of appendix cancers. A small amount of a radioactive, hormone-like substance that is attracted to a carcinoid tumor is injected into a vein. A special camera is then used to show where the radioactive substance accumulates. This procedure is useful in detecting spread of a carcinoid tumor, especially to the liver.

After diagnostic tests are done, your doctor will review all of the results with you. If the diagnosis is appendix cancer, these results also help the doctor describe the cancer; this is called staging.

The [next section in this guide is Stages and Grades](#). [7] It explains the system doctors use to describe the extent of the disease. Or, use the menu to choose another section to continue reading this guide.

Links

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/appendix-cancer/diagnosis>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24406>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24486>

[5] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24578>

[6] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24714>

[7] <http://www.cancer.net/node/18480>