

Appendicitis

In the diagram on page 10, please locate the cecum, the appendix and the ileocecal valve. The left side of the diagram corresponds to the *right* side of the body.

The cecum is a small pouch where the colon begins, in the lower right section of the abdomen. Wastes from the small intestine flow into the cecum through the ileocecal valve (theoretically a one-way valve.) The appendix is a narrow tube attached to the cecum, with a channel opening into the cecum.

Waste matter can get lodged in this channel, causing the appendix to become infected and inflamed. Immediate surgery must be performed to remove the appendix before it bursts. Otherwise, the result is usually fatal.

Why does the appendix get blocked with fecal matter? Did nature make a blunder in its design?

One clue comes from the field of epidemiology. Appendicitis is a disease of westernized countries, virtually unknown in the developing world.^{19,31} The reason is that the cecum was designed to be squeezed empty by the right thigh, in the squatting position. On a *sitting* toilet, it is physically impossible to compress the cecum.

Instead, one pushes downwards with the diaphragm, while holding one's breath. This maneuver inflates and pressurizes the cecum. It is analogous to squeezing a tube of toothpaste in the middle and causing the bottom of the tube to inflate. The pressure can easily force wastes into the appendix, with disastrous consequences.