

When to seek urgent advice

Men

- See a doctor urgently, if you:
 - develop very severe abdominal pain
 - develop pain that goes through to your back
 - develop shoulder pain
 - become feverish or shivery
 - start vomiting or passing blood from your back passage
 - suffer any fainting or collapse episodes
 - are not able to pass urine or open.

Women

- See a doctor urgently, if you:
 - develop very severe abdominal pain
 - develop pain that goes through to your back
 - develop shoulder pain
 - become feverish or shivery
 - start vomiting or passing blood from your back passage
 - bleed much more heavily than normal from your vagina
 - suffer any fainting or collapse episodes
 - are not able to pass urine or open your bowels.

Further support

- For general medical advice please use the NHS website, the NHS 111 service, walk-in-centres, or your GP.
- NHS website provides online health information and guidance www.nhs.uk
- There are walk-in and urgent treatment services at Brighton Station, Crawley Urgent Treatment Centre, Lewes Victoria Hospital, Horsham Minor Injuries Unit and Bognor Regis War Memorial Hospital.

Ref number: 889.1
Publication date: 07/2022
Review date: 07/2025

© University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust Disclaimer: The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.



Abdominal pain

Advice for patients

Overview

- Abdominal pain is a common cause for people to visit the Emergency Department.
- During your visit your doctor will have looked for serious conditions that require you to stay in hospital but has not found any of these.
- In most cases, no serious cause is found for the pain and it will settle down in a few days. However, if your symptoms worsen, you should seek further medical advice.

Treatment

- You should take simple pain killers regularly, such as paracetamol. You can take up to eight paracetamol tablets in a single 24 hour period (maximum 4 grams).
- Discuss your pain relief with a doctor if you have liver or kidney problems, are on medicines for epilepsy or tuberculosis (TB), weigh less than 50kg or regularly drink more than 14 units per week of alcohol.
- If your pain does not settle down within a few days, you should go and see your general practitioner (GP).

Further investigations

- The doctor that has seen you in hospital may have recommended further investigations. This might include an ultrasound, CT or MRI scan.
- Generally these will be organised through your GP but occasionally you will be asked to return to hospital for these further investigations, as needed.
- A report of your scan will be provided for the doctor who referred you.

Ultrasound scan

- Ultrasound is a safe and (usually) painless use of high frequency sound waves to produce images of the internal organs and structures of your body.
- Ultrasound can be used for:
 - Assessing the upper abdomen, including the pancreas, liver, biliary tree, gall bladder, kidneys, bladder and spleen.
 - Checking the pelvis, this includes the uterus, ovaries and endometrium (usually a transvaginal scan).
- Ultrasound is not able to fully evaluate the stomach or bowel, as sound waves are unable to travel through bowel gas and air.

CT scan

- A CT (computerised tomography) scan is a special x-ray examination which allows us to take and review detailed images of the body. Our radiographer will ask you to lie on a special bed.
- The CT scan should only take around 15 minutes. Sometimes the scan may involve the use of a contrast dye.

MRI scan

- Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) is a type of scan that uses strong magnetic fields and radio waves to produce diagnostic images of the internal organs and structures of the body.
- You will lie inside the scanner during the scan and will be given headphones to reduce the effects of the noise of the scanner. The radiographers performing the scan can see you at all times and you will be given a contact buzzer which you can push at any time if you are experiencing any problems. It's important to keep very still during the scan. Scan times vary according to the body part being imaged.
- You will be asked to complete a safety questionnaire to ensure that you meet the safety standards before entering the MRI scanning room and will be asked to remove any jewellery.