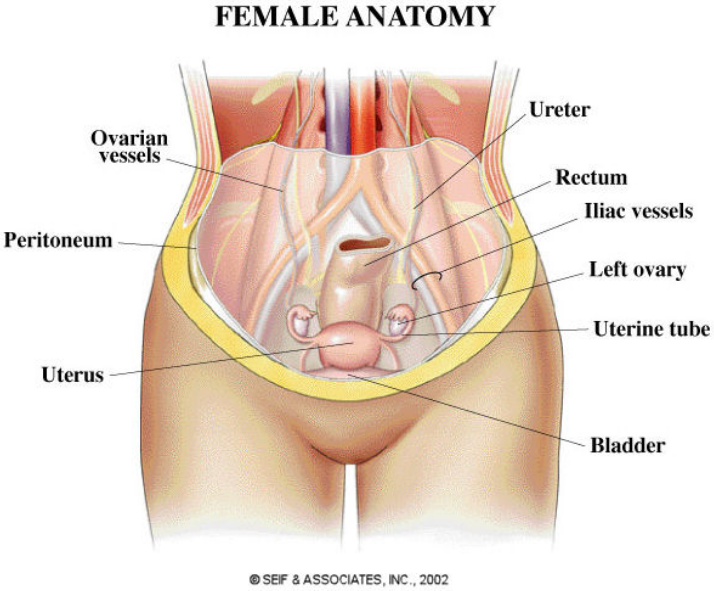
Abdominal Pain In Women

Abdominal (*stomach, pelvic, or belly*) pain can be caused by many things. It is important to tell your doctor:

- The location of the pain.
- Does it come and go or is it present all the time?
- Are there things that start the pain (eating certain foods, exercise)?
- Are there other symptoms associated with the pain (fever, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea)?

All of this is helpful to know when trying to find the cause of the pain.



CAUSES

- Stomach: virus or bacteria infection, or ulcer.
- Intestine: appendicitis (*inflamed appendix*), regional ileitis (*Crohn's disease*), ulcerative colitis (*inflamed colon*), irritable bowel syndrome, diverticulitis (*inflamed diverticulum of the colon*), or cancer of the stomach or intestine.
- Gallbladder disease or stones in the gallbladder.
- Kidney disease, kidney stones, or infection.
- Pancreas infection or cancer.
- Fibromyalgia (*pain disorder*).
- Diseases of the female organs:
  - Uterus: fibroid (*non-cancerous*) tumors or infection.
  - Fallopian tubes: infection or tubal pregnancy.
  - Ovary: cysts or tumors.
  - Pelvic adhesions (*scar tissue*).
  - Endometriosis (*uterus lining tissue growing in the pelvis and on the pelvic organs*).
  - Pelvic congestion syndrome (*female organs filling up with blood just before the menstrual period*).
  - Pain with the menstrual period.
  - Pain with ovulation (*producing an egg*).
  - Pain with an IUD (*intrauterine device, birth control*) in the uterus.
  - Cancer of the female organs.
- Functional pain (*pain not caused by a disease, may improve without treatment*).
- Psychological pain.
- Depression.

DIAGNOSIS

Your doctor will decide the seriousness of your pain by doing an examination.

- Blood tests.
- X-rays.
- Ultrasound.
- CT scan (*computed tomography, special type of X-ray*).
- MRI (*magnetic resonance imaging*).
- Cultures, for infection.
- Barium enema (*dye inserted in the large intestine, to better view it with X-rays*).
- Colonoscopy (*looking in intestine with a lighted tube*).
- Laparoscopy (*minor surgery, looking in abdomen with a lighted tube*).
- Major abdominal exploratory surgery (*looking in abdomen with a large incision*).

TREATMENT

The treatment will depend on the cause of the pain.

- Many cases can be observed and treated at home.
- Over-the-counter medicines recommended by your caregiver.
- Prescription medicine.
- Antibiotics, for infection.
- Birth control pills, for painful periods or for ovulation pain.
- Hormone treatment, for endometriosis.
- Nerve blocking injections.
- Physical therapy.
- Antidepressants.
- Counseling with a psychologist or psychiatrist.
- Minor or major surgery.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Do not take laxatives, unless directed by your caregiver.
- Take over-the-counter pain medicine only if ordered by your caregiver. Do not take aspirin because it can cause an upset stomach or bleeding.
- Try a clear liquid diet (broth or water) as ordered by your caregiver. Slowly move to a bland diet, as tolerated, if the pain is related to the stomach or intestine.
- Have a thermometer and take your temperature several times a day, and record it.
- Bed rest and sleep, if it helps the pain.
- Avoid sexual intercourse, if it causes pain.
- Avoid stressful situations.
- Keep your follow-up appointments and tests, as your caregiver orders.
- If the pain does not go away with medicine or surgery, you may try:
  - Acupuncture.
  - Relaxation exercises (yoga, meditation).
  - Group therapy.
  - Counseling.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You notice certain foods cause stomach pain.
- Your home care treatment is not helping your pain.
- You need stronger pain medicine.
- You want your IUD removed.
- You feel faint or light headed.
- You develop nausea and vomiting.
- You develop a rash.
- You are having side effects or an allergy to your medicine.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- The pain does not go away or gets worse.
- An oral temperature above 100º F (37.9º C) develops, or as directed by your caregiver.
- The pain is felt only in portions of the abdomen. The right side could possibly be appendicitis. The left lower portion of the abdomen could be colitis or diverticulitis.
- Blood is being passed in stools (bright red or black tarry stools, with or without vomiting).
- You have blood in your urine.
- You develop chills, with or without a fever.
- You pass out.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

Document Released: 10/14/2008 Document Re-Released: 03/14/2011
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.