# Retroperitoneal Bleeding
## Idiopathic Retroperitoneal Hematoma

Idiopathic retroperitoneal hematoma is a rare life-threatening problem. It happens when vessels behind the belly (*abdomen*) begin to bleed. Idiopathic means the cause is not known. Retroperitoneal means the bleeding is taking place behind the peritoneum. The peritoneum is the smooth shiny lining of the abdomen.

### CAUSES

The causes of this can include:

- Bleeding from any organ.
- Bleeding from a tumor.
- Trauma. An example is a car accident that:
  - Damages organs in the belly (often the kidneys).
  - Fractures of the pelvis.
- Bleeding due to clotting disorders.
- Bleeding from an aneurysm. An aneurysm is a swelling in a vessel from weakening in the wall of the artery. This would be similar to a bulge in a tire. Aneurysms can suddenly rupture and cause massive bleeding. The problems also occur in patients on dialysis. These are some of the known causes; many of the causes are unknown (*idiopathic*).

### SYMPTOMS

- Swelling in the belly (*abdominal mass* ).
- Dropping of blood pressure, so there may be a feeling of light headedness or fainting.
- Nausea and vomiting.

### DIAGNOSIS

- The diagnosis of this problem is made by laboratory work and specialized x-rays. An angiogram may be done which is a specialized x-ray of the vessels to see where the bleeding is coming from.

### TREATMENT

- Sometimes the treatment of this may simply involve close observation. This means being admitted to a hospital ICU (Intensive Care Unit) and having the condition watched closely.
- Often the condition may get better without surgery.
- If the condition worsens and the condition of the patient becomes unstable, surgery may be necessary to look for possible bleeding areas.

### PROGNOSIS

When the cause of bleeding can be found, the prognosis is good. If the cause can not be found, the prognosis may be poor.

Document Released: 03/09/2006 Document Re-Released: 03/16/2010
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