



Chronic abdominal pain

(March 2023)

Rationale

Chronic or recurrent abdominal pain is a common symptom with an extensive differential diagnosis and heterogeneous pathophysiology. The history and physical examination frequently differentiate amongst the causative disorders.

Causal Conditions

(list not exhaustive)

- Upper abdominal region
 - a. Malignancy
 - b. Ulcer and nonulcer dyspepsia
 - c. Biliary disease
 - d. Pancreatic disease
 - e. Hepatic disease
 - f. Referred cardiothoracic pain
- Lower abdominal region
 - a. Bowel disease
 - Inflammatory bowel disease
 - Diverticular disease
 - Irritable bowel syndrome
 - Malignancy
 - b. Genitourinary disease

- Dysmenorrhea
- Benign or malignant tumors
- Other causes
 - a. Food allergies and intolerances (including celiac disease)
 - b. Constipation
 - c. Musculoskeletal
 - d. Functional

Key Objectives

Given a patient with chronic abdominal pain, the candidate will diagnose the cause, severity, and complications, and will initiate an appropriate management plan.

Enabling Objectives

Given a patient with chronic abdominal pain, the candidate will

- list and interpret critical clinical findings, including those derived from a detailed history and an appropriate physical examination;
- list and interpret critical investigations, including laboratory investigations, basic and advanced imaging, and endoscopic evaluation; and
- construct an effective initial management plan, including
 - a. appropriate medical, surgical, and nonpharmacologic management;
 - b. determining whether this is a case for which long-term follow-up is required due to the risk of later complications; and
 - c. recognition of possible underlying psychosocial issues leading to abdominal pain (e.g., spousal abuse, anxiety).