

CHRONIC ABDOMINAL PAIN

Scott Brown, DO; Alissa Cohen, DO

Ronald Januchowski, DO, FACP, Editor • Paula Gregory, DO, MBA, CHCQM, FAIHQ, Health Literacy Editor



Abdominal pain is a very common concern for patients of all ages and may become chronic if your symptoms fail to improve over a period of several months. Abdominal pain can be due to many causes, including constipation, a urinary tract infection, gallbladder disease, or heartburn, among others. Abdominal pain may also be functional. Functional pain does not have a specific cause but is often related to stress or other changes in your mood. A diagnosis of functional abdominal pain generally comes after your doctor has completed testing to rule out other causes.

COMMON CAUSES OF ABDOMINAL PAIN:

Below is a list of common causes of abdominal pain organized by pain location. Note there are many other causes besides those listed, and sometimes pain may be due to a reason from a different region of the abdomen.

COMMON CAUSES OF ABDOMINAL PAIN BY LOCATION		
Right Upper Quadrant Liver Gallbladder	Upper Middle Abdomen Stomach Pancreas	Left Upper Quadrant Spleen Pancreas
Right Mid Back/Flank Kidney Muscles Ribs	Belly Button/Lower Abdomen Appendix Prostate Uterus	Left Mid Back/Flank Kidney Muscles Ribs
Right Lower Quadrant Appendix Ovary	Diffuse/All Over Small Intestine Large Intestine	Left Lower Quadrant Ovary Large Intestine

MONITOR YOUR SYMPTOMS:

It is important that you continue to monitor your symptoms closely and report these findings to your doctor. Many patients find journaling helpful for this. Specifically, take note of what you ate, what makes your symptoms better and worse, and look out for concerning warning signs and symptoms. These concerning symptoms include weight loss, fever, blood in your stool, vomit, or urine, a yellowing of the skin or eyes called jaundice or difficulty swallowing or going to the bathroom. If these symptoms occur, please contact your doctor's office for further recommendations.

OMT TREATMENT OPTION:

Fortunately, your Osteopathic Family Physician has received additional training to address many causes of abdominal pain with a hands-on treatment known as Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment, or "OMT." These treatment techniques are safe and generally well tolerated by patients and can help improve your symptoms along with other treatment methods. If you are interested in this treatment, please ask your doctor about whether OMT could be beneficial for your pain.

SOURCE(S): Up to Date; DynaMed; Osteopathic Family Physician.

The Osteopathic Family Physician Patient Handout is a public service of the ACOFP. The information and recommendations appearing on this page are appropriate in many instances; however, they are not a substitute for medical diagnosis by a physician. For specific information concerning your medical condition, ACOFP suggests that you consult your family physician. This page may be photocopied noncommercially by physicians and other healthcare professionals to share with their patients.

For additional patient related educational material please visit our website at www.acofp.org.