

Common Abdominal Histories

Presenting complaint	Exploding symptom	Relevant system reviews	Differential diagnoses		Clues to differential
			Grouping	Differentials	
Abdominal pain	<p>Site</p> <p>Onset</p> <p>Character</p> <p>Radiation</p> <p>Associated symptoms</p> <p>Timing</p> <p>Exacerbating/relieving factors</p> <p>Severity</p>	<p><u>General</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Fever, sweats <p><u>Gastrointestinal</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<i>Weight</i>: loss, appetite change •<i>Work down body</i>: dysphagia, nausea/ vomiting, indigestion/ heartburn, bowel habit change, blood/ mucus in stool <p><u>Urological</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<i>Storage</i>: frequency, volume, urgency/ nocturia •<i>Infection</i>: dysuria, haematuria <p><u>Gynaecological (if female)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<i>PV Bleeding</i>: menorrhagia, inter-menstrual bleeding, post-coital, post-menopausal bleeding •<i>PV Discharge</i> •<i>Pain</i>: pelvic/dysmenorrhoea/ dyspareunia •Chance could be pregnant 	Gastrointestinal	Appendicitis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Young patient •Periumbilical pain •Moves to RIF •Anorexia
				Gallstones	<p><u>Biliary colic</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Intermittent RUQ pain •Exacerbated by fatty food <p><u>Cholecystitis</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Continuous RUQ pain <p><u>CBD stones</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Jaundice •RUQ pain <p><u>Cholangitis</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Jaundice •Fever/rigors •RUQ pain
				Pancreatitis	<p><u>Acute pancreatitis</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Severe epigastric/central pain •Radiating to back •Relieved by sitting forwards •Vomiting
				Gastritis/peptic ulcer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Epigastric pain •Related to meals •Risk factors e.g. NSAIDs, alcohol, spicy food
				Diverticulitis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Elderly •LIF pain •Pyrexia
				Bowel obstruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Vomiting + abdo pain + no bowel motions
			Urological	Renal colic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Spasms of loin to groin pain (excruciating) •Nausea and vomiting •Cannot lie still
			Gynaecological	Ectopic pregnancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Increasing iliac fossa/pelvic pain •~6 weeks pregnant/not using contraception •May have spotting
			Other differentials	Ruptured AAA Gastroenteritis Volvulus Pyelonephritis IBD Mesenteric ischaemia Pelvic inflammatory disease Endometriosis Non-abdominal (MI, pneumonia, DKA)	

Change in bowel habit	<p><u>Timing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •When started •Acute/ gradual onset •Duration •Progression •Intermittent or continuous <p><u>Stool</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •How much, how often, consistency •Colour & contents (mucus, blood, bile if vomiting) 	<p><u>Gastrointestinal</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<i>Weight</i>: loss, appetite change •<i>Work down body</i>: dysphagia, nausea/ vomiting, indigestion/ heartburn, abdominal pain, blood/ mucus in stool 	Gastrointestinal	Colon cancer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Elderly •Blood in stool/melaena •Weight loss
				Gastroenteritis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Acute diarrhoea •Nausea & vomiting
				Inflammatory bowel disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Blood/ mucus in stool •Abdominal pain
				Irritable bowel syndrome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Fluctuate between diarrhoea and constipation •Associated with stress •Anxious personality
				Coeliac disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Diarrhoea, steatorrhoea •Anaemia symptoms •Abdominal discomfort
			Endocrinological	Thyrotoxicosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Diarrhoea •Heat intolerance •Irritability/ restlessness •Tremor •Oligomenorrhoea/amenorrhoea
				Hypothyroidism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Constipation •Cold intolerance •Lethargy/ tiredness •Menorrhagia
			Other differentials	Bowel obstruction Diet and lifestyle changes Peri-anal conditions (haemorrhoids, fissure) Drugs (e.g. opiates, iron, antacids, antibiotics) Diverticulitis Overflow constipation Lactose intolerance Chronic infection	

Rectal bleeding	<u>Timing</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •When started •Acute/ gradual onset •Duration •Progression •Intermittent or continuous <u>Rectal bleeding</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Blood: fresh/altered/melaena •When does it occur <u>Stool</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Any mucus •How much, how often, consistency 	<u>Gastrointestinal</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<i>Weight</i>: loss, appetite change •<i>Work down body</i>: dysphagia, nausea/ vomiting, indigestion/ heartburn, abdominal pain, bowel habit change, mucus in stool 	<p style="text-align: center;">Fresh blood (distal)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Melaena (proximal)</p>	Anal fissure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Bleeding on defecation •Bright red on tissue paper •Intense anal pain •Constipation history
				Haemorrhoids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Bleeding on defecation •Bright red on tissue paper •Constipation history
				Diverticular haemorrhage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Sudden painless rectal bleeding •Elderly
				Distal polyp/cancer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Alternating bowel habit •Weight loss •Urgency/ tenesmus
				Inflammatory bowel disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Blood mixed with stool •Mucus •Diarrhoea •Abdominal pain
				Haemorrhagic infective gastroenteritis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Acute diarrhoea and vomiting •History of suspicious food intake
				Angiodysplasia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Elderly
				Proximal polyp/ cancer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Weight loss •Anaemia symptoms
				Haemorrhagic peptic ulcer/ gastritis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Gastritis symptoms •Risk factors e.g. NSAIDs, alcohol, spicy food
				Oesophageal varices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •History of liver disease/ alcoholism •May be encephalopathy or alcohol withdrawal •Haematemesis

Haematemesis	<u>Timing</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •When started •Acute/ gradual onset •Duration •Progression •Intermittent or continuous <u>Vomit</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •How much, how often, consistency •Colour & contents (mucus, blood, bile if vomiting) 	<u>Gastrointestinal</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<i>Weight</i>: loss, appetite change •<i>Work down body</i>: dysphagia, indigestion/ heartburn, abdominal pain, bowel habit change, blood/ mucus in stool 	Gastrointestinal	Peptic ulcer haemorrhage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Previous gastritis symptoms
				Oesophageal varices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •History of liver disease/ alcoholism •May be encephalopathy or alcohol withdrawal
				Mallory-Weiss tear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Multiple vomits before haematemesis onset •Commonly after binge drinking
				Haemorrhagic gastritis/ oesophagitis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Previous gastritis symptoms •Risk factors e.g. NSAIDs, alcohol, spicy food