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ABDOMINAL PAIN:

Abdominal pains are very common and everyone will have them at some time in their life. If it persists long enough or is intense enough, it will make you consider seeing the doctor.

Abdominal pain can occur all on it's own, or in association with other symptoms. This makes a big difference, because pain that is associated with diarrhea is much less likely to be something that will ultimately require surgery, than say pains that are accompanied by nausea or vomiting.

The most common of the abdominal pain syndromes that occur, are best understood by the location they are felt:

Right Upper Quadrant: Above the navel and to the right

Right Lower Quadrant: Below the navel and to the right

Left Lower Quadrant: Below the navel and to the left

Left Upper Quadrant: *Not mentioned here as it tends not to be associated with particular abdominal pain syndromes.*

Right upper quadrant abdominal pain that is severe and colicky (comes in 'waves'): This can be gallbladder pain and is a concern if very intense (7+ on the pain scale....see page???) and associated with nausea and vomiting. Milder symptoms can be associated with a more lingering course...so if symptoms persist for over a day or two, it's best to be seen by the doctor.

Right low abdominal pain that is severe and persisting. This can be appendicitis. If intense (5+ on the pain scale on page ??) and lasting several hours without relief, it is a reason to be checked. Nausea, vomiting can be associated. Certainly you will lose your appetite and feel a bit bloated or constipated. Diarrhea is rarely seen here, if ever.

If the right lower quadrant pain is colicky pain (cramping pain that comes in waves), that can be a sign of a kidney stone and should also be considered.

Typically, with this pain you will get waves of pain that are 7+ on the pain scale and will generally cause you to want to move around to find a comfortable position. If you want to just 'sit still' this is typically not a kidney stone pain. Associated blood in the urine also helps with the diagnosis.

Left lower abdominal pain that is severe and persistent. The major concern here is diverticulitis. This is typically a persisting and near constant pain in the abdomen that can last for hours or days. It is associated commonly with constipation and difficulty moving the bowels. The pain is moderately severe (5+ on the pain scale)

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Diffuse cramping abdominal pains associated with nausea and vomiting. When severe and intense (7+ on the pain scale) consideration is given to small bowel obstruction. In this situation, the small intestine gets trapped under an adhesion (scar) from a previous surgery on the abdomen, or will get trapped in a hernia. The pain is colicky and severe-- generally causing a person to writhe around in pain when intense.

Colicky left or right lower abdominal pains. Consider kidney stones. This is listed above, but is important to consider as it is so common.

Pain is colicky (comes in waves), is severe (7+ on the pain scale) and is accompanied by periods of complete, or near complete pain resolution, only to have the pain return. Kidney stone pain 'respects the midline' meaning that it's either on the right side...or all on the left side, but it will not be on both the right and left sides during one attack. So...if the pain stays 'sided'...this is a consideration. If the pain 'generalizes' across the abdomen, it is not a kidney stone.

For milder pains of the abdomen of various sorts that are less than 5+ on the pain scale and which are briefer (lasting less than an hour) the general recommendations include:

- Keep the diet light
- Use a low level heating pad on and off (30 minutes at a time with 30 minutes rest).
- Tylenol or Advil for mild pain relief
- Use Pepcid AC to reduce acidity and relieve the digestion of work

