



**University
Hospitals Sussex**
NHS Foundation Trust

Abdominal (tummy) pain

Accident and emergency

Patient information

What is abdominal (tummy) pain?

Abdominal pain is one of the most common reasons people visit the Emergency Department.

- During your visit, the doctor ruled out any serious conditions that would need hospital treatment.
- In most cases, no serious cause is found. The pain usually gets better on its own within a few days.
- If your symptoms get worse or do not improve, please see a doctor.

What pain relief can I take?

You can take simple painkillers like paracetamol regularly to manage your pain.

The maximum dose is 8 tablets in 24 hours (4 grams a day).

Discuss pain relief with your doctor if:

- You have liver or kidney problems
- You take medicine for epilepsy or tuberculosis (TB)
- You weigh less than 50 kg
- You regularly drink more than 14 units of alcohol a week.

If your pain doesn't get better in a few days, book an appointment with your GP.

What scans might I need?

Your doctor may have recommended scans such as an ultrasound, CT, or MRI.

- Most of these are arranged by your GP, but you may be asked to return to the hospital in some cases.
- The results will be sent to the doctor who referred you.

Ultrasound

- Ultrasound scan uses sound waves to create images of the organs inside your body
- Safe and usually painless
- Often used to look at the:
 - **Upper abdomen;** liver, gallbladder, pancreas, kidneys, spleen, bladder
 - **Pelvis:** uterus, Ovaries, and womb lining (sometimes using a transvaginal scan)
 - Ultrasound cannot clearly show the stomach or bowel.

CT Scan (Computerised Tomography)

- CT scans use X-rays to take detailed pictures of the body
- You will lie on a bed that moves through the scanner
- The scan takes about 15 minutes
- Sometimes a contrast dye is used to make the images clearer. This will be explained to you beforehand.

MRI Scan (Magnetic Resonance Imaging)

- MRI scans use strong magnets and radio waves to produce detailed images
- You will lie inside the scanner and wear headphones to reduce noise
- Radiographers will monitor you. You'll have a buzzer to alert them if needed
- It is important to lie still during the scan
- Scan length varies depending on the area being looked at
- You will be asked to fill in a safety form and remove all jewellery beforehand.

When to seek urgent help

- Have very severe or worsening abdominal pain
- Feel pain that spreads to your back or shoulder
- Have a fever, feel shivery, or generally unwell
- Start vomiting blood or passing blood from your bottom
- Faint, collapse, or feel very dizzy
- Cannot pee or poo

Additional Advice for Women

Also seek urgent help if you bleed much more heavily than usual from your vagina.

Further support

For general medical advice please use the NHS website, the NHS 111 service, walk-in-centres, or your GP.

The **NHS website** www.nhs.uk/ provides online health information and guidance.

There are walk-in and urgent treatment services at Brighton Station, Crawley Urgent Treatment Centre, Lewes Victoria Hospital, Horsham Minor Injuries Unit and Bognor Regis War Memorial Hospital.

This information is intended for patients receiving care in Brighton & Hove or Haywards Heath.

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