

Abdominal Pain Mimics



Jessica Palmer, MD^a, Elizabeth Pontius, MD, RDMS^{a,b,*}

KEYWORDS

• Abdominal pain • Mimics • Diagnoses

KEY POINTS

- Emergency department providers have become skilled at triaging patients with abdominal pain requiring surgical interventions.
- Abdominal pain mimics, medical conditions that cause the sensation of abdominal pain without abdominal abnormality, continue to puzzle the best physicians.

As any emergency physician can attest, abdominal pain makes up a significant portion of chief complaints. Eleven percent of emergency department (ED) visits are attributed to abdominal pain each year.¹ Fortunately, with improvements in technology and advancements in imaging, ED providers have become skilled at triaging patients with abdominal pain requiring surgical interventions. However, abdominal pain mimics, medical conditions that cause the sensation of abdominal pain without abdominal abnormality, continue to puzzle the best physicians. In this article, abdominal pain mimics, which includes diagnoses that cannot be missed, conditions that require urgent evaluation, and additional conditions to consider when broadening a differential diagnosis, are discussed (**Box 1**).

Box 1

Abdominal pain mimics

Metabolic

Diabetic ketoacidosis

Alcoholic ketoacidosis

Calcium abnormalities

Thyrotoxicosis

Uremia

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^a Department of Emergency Medicine, MedStar Washington Hospital Center, 110 Irving Street Northwest NA 11-77, Washington, DC 20010, USA; ^b Department of Emergency Medicine, Georgetown University School of Medicine, Washington, DC, USA

* Correspondence author.

E-mail address: epontius@gmail.com

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Porphyria

Pheochromocytoma

Adrenal crisis

Hematologic

Sickle cell disease

Neutropenic enterocolitis

Spontaneous splenic rupture

Immunologic

Angioedema

Henoch-Schonlein purpura

Systemic lupus erythematosus

Polyarteritis nodosa

Food allergy

Infectious

Pneumonia

Tuberculosis

Lyme disease

Pharyngitis (Lemierre syndrome)

Toxic

Mushroom intoxication

Alcohol intoxication

Metal poisoning

Envenomation

Opioid withdrawal

Cardiopulmonary

Atypical acute coronary syndrome

Pulmonary embolism

Pneumonia

Congestive heart failure

Functional

Abdominal migraine

Cyclic vomiting

Irritable bowel syndrome

Neurologic

Herpes zoster

Abdominal epilepsy

Environmental

Heat stroke

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