

Patient Information for Recurrent Abdominal Pain

I'VE HAD A NEGATIVE ABDOMINAL CT SCAN IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS. SHOULD I HAVE ANOTHER?

Computed tomography, also known as CT scan, is a test often used in emergency departments. CT uses x-rays to produce pictures of the inside of the body. When the cause of pain is uncertain and other factors suggest an emergency, CT can help your doctor determine the next steps in treatment, including the need for surgery. There is the small risk of CT causing cancer over your lifetime (less than a 1% chance or less than 1 in 100 – and for some patients, far less). CT could also add time and cost to your care.

MY RECENT CT SCAN WAS NORMAL. SHOULD I HAVE AN ULTRASOUND?

When a CT scan of the abdomen is normal, the chances of an emergency are thought to be less than 1% (1 in 100). Very rarely, an ultrasound of the gallbladder or female organs of the pelvis may show a problem not seen on a CT scan. If your doctor has reasons to suspect that your pain is related to these body regions, an ultrasound may be useful to guide your care. Ultrasound has no known harmful effects but could add time and cost to your care with little benefit. You might experience discomfort during an ultrasound exam.

I'M HERE FOR ABDOMINAL PAIN. WHY IS THE DOCTOR ASKING ABOUT DEPRESSION?

Depression affects as many as 25% (1 in 4) of people visiting emergency departments for abdominal pain. Sometimes mental health conditions such as depression cause physical symptoms such as abdominal pain. Sometimes having a long-term painful condition such as abdominal pain can lead to or make depression worse. When your doctor asks about depression, they aren't saying that your abdominal pain is "just in your head." They are hoping to find ways to help you feel better. Your doctor knows that you could have a serious cause of abdominal pain, whether or not you have symptoms of depression.

PAIN MANAGEMENT OPTIONS FOR ABDOMINAL PAIN

There are many options for treating pain, and the best option for each patient may be different. Your doctor will consider the most likely causes of your pain and will work with you to decide on treatments options.

OPIOID PAIN MEDICATIONS

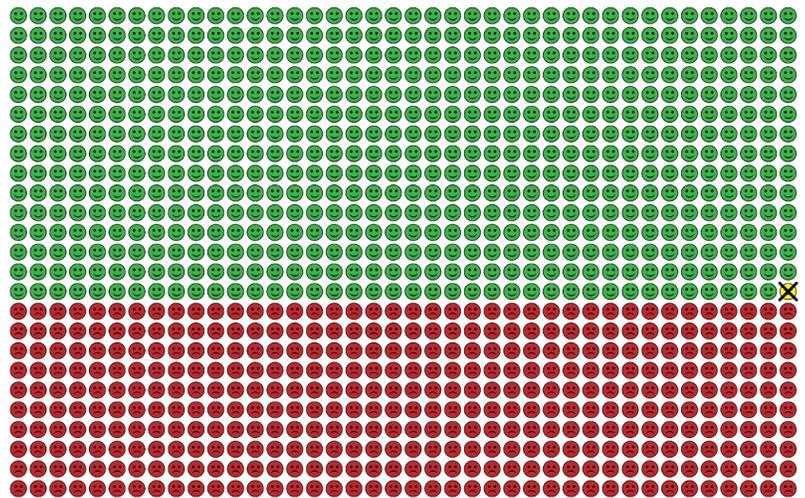
Opioid medications such as morphine and oxycodone can be very dangerous, causing constipation, nausea, sleepiness, coma and even death. Opioid overdose is one of the leading causes of death in the United States. If a person becomes dependent on opioid medications, it may be very difficult to stop using them, despite their negative effects on overall health. If your doctor avoids giving you an opioid medication, they are not judging you. They are trying to keep you as safe as possible while providing pain relief.

WHAT ELSE CAN HELP RELIEVE PAIN?

Research shows that many other medications may work just as well, or even better, than opioids. Acetaminophen, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications like ibuprofen, acid reducing medications, and even nonmedical approaches such as mindfulness and yoga may be beneficial. Your doctor will adjust your therapy to your individual needs.



These 600 people will not experience cancer, just as if they had not had an abdominal CT*



This one person will suffer from cancer because they had an abdominal CT

These 400 people will experience cancer, whether or not they had an abdominal CT

KEY 😊 = NO CANCER ❌ = ADDITIONAL CANCER DUE TO ABDOMINAL CT 😞 = CANCER

*Estimated risk for a typical adult patient

