



NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S
When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.™

Helping Hand™

Health Education for Patients and Families

Abdominal Pain: Hospital Admission

Abdominal pain (belly pain) can happen for many reasons. At this time, we do not know if your child's abdominal pain is caused by a more serious illness, such as appendicitis. Your child is in the hospital so that we can examine and watch him or her closely.

Signs and symptoms

Your child's nurse will check for the following signs and symptoms:

- pain around the belly button that moves to the right lower area of the abdomen
- pain that gets worse with activity, or constant pain, even if it is not severe
- pain that causes your child to double over, refuse to walk, or make him walk in an unusual way
- bloated or swelled belly
- nausea, vomiting, or unable to eat
- blood in vomit or green vomit
- blood in the urine
- pain or burning when urinating
- Diarrhea, bloody, or dark green stools
- Pain in the groin or testicles
- Pain in the vagina along with a discharge.
- Fever

What the nurses will do

While your child is in the hospital, the nurses will check your child every 2 hours or every _____ (Picture 1). Often, lights will be turned on, even if your child is sleeping. The nurses will:

- measure the belly's girth (size) on admission and every 4 hours, as needed.
- may press on your child's belly.
- ask your child to rate his or her pain level using a scale that is age-appropriate.
- look for changes in your child's skin color.
- check your child's breathing, heart rate (how fast the heart beats), and temperature.
- check capillary refill. The nurse will press her finger on the tip of your child's finger until it turns pale. When the nurse stops pressing, she will watch how fast the finger's color returns to normal.
- measure your child's urine output (how much your child urinates).



Picture 1 The nurse will check your child often during the day and at night.

It is very important to work with the nurses. You should let them check your child often and tell them if the child's pain gets worse. That way they can report any changes to the doctor right away.

What else to expect for the next 24 hours

- Your child may receive pain medicine in small doses until the doctor has checked him or her. Then it is given only when absolutely needed. Pain medicine can cover up worsening symptoms that the doctor needs to know about.
- Your child will be NPO (have nothing to eat or drink) or be on a clear liquid diet. This is to prevent any delays if your child needs further tests or surgery. The nurse will tell you which foods or drinks are allowed.
- If your child's abdominal pain gets better, he or she will be allowed a regular diet and may be able to go home. If the pain worsens or does not get better, the doctor will let you know what the next steps will be.