

Summary of Skills – Abdominal Exam

- 1. Wash hands
- 2. Gown and drape appropriately – allowing full exposure
- 3. Exam done from right-hand side of the patient's body

Observe & inspect abdomen

- 4. Shape, scars, color, symmetry, unusual protrusions

Auscultation

- 5. Listen w/diaphragm to 4 quadrants – 15 seconds each area
- 6. Note quantify and quality of bowel sounds
- 7. Listen for bruits centrally & over renal arteries (***special test** – relevant if unexplained hypertension, kidney disease, ischemic symptoms and appropriate risk factors)

Percussion

- 8. Percuss all quadrants
- 9. Percuss liver span
- 10. Percuss area of spleen, stomach

Palpation

- 11. Palpate all quadrants superficially
- 12. Palpate all quadrants deeply – think about what “lives” in each area
- 13. Try to identify liver edge (w/inspiration)
- 14. Palpate region of spleen
- 15. Palpate area of aorta (***special test**: if risk factors for AAA)
- 16. Assess costo-vertebral angle for tenderness (***special test**: if concern for pyelonephritis)
- 17. Wash hands

***Special Test:** Not done on routine exam – Reserved for specific clinical situations