

Pediatric 
Abdomen CT and Abdomen/Pelvis CT
Test Request Tip Sheet

- Abdomen and abdomen/pelvis CTs deliver a high radiation dose and performing them with and without contrast delivers roughly double the dose. Studies should be ordered sequentially if needed and not concurrently, as the second study is rarely required.
- Ultrasound should always be considered as the first imaging study in the evaluation of abdominal complaints in children.
- Laboratory work that will confirm or rule out inflammatory conditions such as appendicitis should be completed and documented in the clinical record before the CT request is made.


Radiation Exposure

Abdomen CT: 8 mSv


Abdomen/Pelvis CT: 14 mSv

Radiation exposure should be limited whenever possible.

With and without contrast doubles the radiation dose.



We follow Choosing Wisely recommendations for functional abdominal pain and pediatric abdominal pain/suspected appendicitis.

Pediatric Considerations from Choosing Wisely 

As part of Choosing Wisely, each participating specialty society has created lists of “Things Physicians and Patients Should Question” that provide specific, evidence-based recommendations that physicians and patients should discuss to help make wise decisions about the most appropriate care based on their individual situations. The items below represent the recommendations associated with abdomen and abdomen/pelvis CT.

- **CT scans aren’t necessary in the routine evaluation of abdominal pain.** *(American Academy of Pediatrics)*
- **Don’t do CT for the evaluation of suspected appendicitis in children until after ultrasound has been considered as an option.** *(American College of Radiology)*
- **Don’t do CT for the evaluation of suspected appendicitis in children until after ultrasound has been considered as an option.** *(American College of Surgeons)*

Other Imaging Considerations from Choosing Wisely

- **For a patient with functional abdominal pain syndrome (as per ROME III criteria), CTs shouldn’t be repeated unless there’s a major change in clinical findings or symptoms.** *(American Gastroenterological Society)*

Choosing Wisely® is an initiative of the ABIM Foundation to help physicians and patients engage in conversations about the overuse of tests and procedures and support physician efforts to help patients make smart and effective care choices. Recognizing the importance of physicians and patients working together, leading specialty societies, along with *Consumer Reports*, have joined Choosing Wisely to help improve the quality and safety of health care in America.