Visible intestinal peristalsis

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DESCRIPTION

A 52-year-old man who had a history of recurrent constipation presented with an intermittent nausea and vomiting that started 1 day prior. He had a history of Nissen fundoplication for the repair of a hiatus hernia. He also had congenital mental retardation and was not unable to fully explain his symptoms. According to his caregiver, he had lost his appetite since 7 days prior. The caregiver also noted that his abdomen had increased in girth. One day prior, he started vomiting continuously and he was brought to the emergency room. He denied abdominal pain, back pain or recent trauma. Abdominal examination revealed a markedly distended abdomen and visible intestinal peristalsis, that is a specific finding of obstruction of intestine

Video 1 Abdominal examination showing visible intestinal peristalsis.

Figure 1 Upper abdomen: abdominal CT scan with contrast.

Figure 2 Lower abdomen: abdominal CT scan with contrast.

(video 1).¹ Digital rectal examination showed a massive stool in his rectum, which was confirmed by abdominal CT without contrast (figures 1 and 2). After a manual faecal disimpaction followed by rectal enema administration, his abdominal symptoms disappeared.

Learning points

- ▶ Visible intestinal peristalsis strongly indicates intestinal obstruction.
- ▶ When a patient presents with nausea and vomiting, do not omit to uncover the patient, and inspect the abdominal surface. This may lead physicians to the diagnosis promptly.

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Competing interests None.

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