

The abdomen is inspected by positioning the patient supine on an examining table or bed. Visible intestinal peristalsis can be caused by intestinal obstruction. Assess for masses or bulges, which may indicate structural deformities like hernias or related to disorders in abdominal organs. The contour of the abdomen is often described as flat, rounded, scaphoid (sunken), or protuberant (convex or bulging). Visually examine the abdomen for overall shape, masses, skin abnormalities, and any abnormal movements. Generalized distention of the abdomen can be caused by obesity, bowel distention from gas or liquid, or fluid buildup. Ensure the patient is covered adequately to maintain privacy, while still exposing the abdomen as needed for a thorough assessment. Carefully note any scars, and correlate these scars with the patient's recollection of previous surgeries or injury.