Right Upper Quadrant Pain

Right upper quadrant pain is a common problem. Although it can be difficult to detect the cause, gallbladder inflammation (https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/cholecystitis) is the most common concern. Imaging can be helpful to find the source of the pain.

Ultrasound (US) abdomen (https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/abdominus) is usually appropriate as the first imaging test for those with right upper quadrant abdominal pain. Other imaging tests may also be appropriate: CT abdomen (https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/abdominct) with intravenous (IV) contrast, MRI abdomen (https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/mri-abdomen-pelvis) without and with IV contrast with MR cholangiopancreatography (MRCP) (https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/mrcp) , MRI abdomen without IV contrast with MRCP, Tc-99m cholescintigraphy (tracking a tracer given by IV from the liver into the gallbladder and small intestine), and CT abdomen without IV contrast.

With a negative or questionable US with no fever or elevated white blood cell count, MRI abdomen without and with IV contrast with MRCP, MRI without IV contrast with MRCP, or CT abdomen with IV contrast is usually appropriate as next imaging.

In someone who also has a fever and elevated white blood cell count, MRI without and with IV contrast with MRCP, CT with IV contrast, or Tc-99m cholescintigraphy is usually appropriate as the next imaging test.

In cases of gallbladder inflammation without evidence of gallstones (https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/gallstones) or duct obstruction, Tc-99m cholescintigraphy is usually appropriate. CT with IV contrast, CT without IV contrast, MRI without and with IV contrast with MRCP, percutaneous cholecystostomy (placing catheter into the gallbladder), or MRI without IV contrast with MRCP may also be appropriate.

— By Susan Anemone and Jennifer W. Uyeda, MD. This information originally appeared in the *Journal of the American College of Radiology*..

Disclaimer

This information is copied from the RadiologyInfo Web site (http://www.radiologyinfo.org) which is dedicated to providing the highest quality information. To ensure that, each section is reviewed by a physician with expertise in the area presented. All information contained in the Web site is further reviewed by an ACR (American College of Radiology) - RSNA (Radiological Society of North America) committee, comprising physicians with expertise in several radiologic areas.

However, it is not possible to assure that this Web site contains complete, up-to-date information on any particular subject. Therefore, ACR and RSNA make no representations or warranties about the suitability of this information for use for any particular purpose. All information is provided "as is" without express or implied warranty.

Please visit the RadiologyInfo Web site at **http://www.radiologyinfo.org** to view or download the latest information.

Note: Images may be shown for illustrative purposes. Do not attempt to draw conclusions or make diagnoses by comparing these images to other medical images, particularly your own. Only qualified physicians should interpret images; the radiologist is the physician expert trained in medical imaging.

Copyright

This material is copyrighted by either the Radiological Society of North America (RSNA), 820 Jorie Boulevard, Oak Brook, IL 60523-2251 or the American College of Radiology (ACR), 1891 Preston White Drive, Reston, VA 20191-4397. Commercial reproduction or multiple distribution by any traditional or electronically based reproduction/publication method is prohibited.

Copyright ® 2026 Radiological Society of North America, Inc.

Copyright© 2026, RadiologyInfo.org