

45) A mother brings in her 8-week old infant to triage and describes projectile vomiting and constant hunger. The infant is found to have an olive-shaped abdominal mass upon palpation. What condition do you suspect?

- A) Pyloric stenosis
- B) Intussusception
- C) Appendicitis
- D) Peptic ulcer disease



A – An olive-shaped abdominal mass in a child 3 to 12 weeks old is considered to be indicative of pyloric stenosis. Research now shows that the classic sign of an “olive shaped abdominal mass,” as a result of a thickened pylorus, is far rarer than previously thought. So, while the terminology is still out there in teaching and testing, finding this occurring in actual practice seems to be pretty unusual. A delay in the diagnosis and treatment of this obstruction can lead to severe dehydration from the persisting projectile vomiting.

Intussusception signs and symptoms include vomiting, “red currant jelly” stools, and episodic abdominal pain. This condition is from strangulation of the small intestine when it gets stuck as it telescopes into an adjacent segment of bowel. Appendicitis is more common in the school-age and teenage years and tends to be associated with right sided abdominal pain (although not always) and a low-grade fever. Peptic ulcer disease is very rarely a condition of infants. Just as severe abdominal pain and a female teenager should prompt you to think about an ectopic pregnancy, when you hear Persistent Projectile Puking in a child less than 3-months of age, always think about pyloric stenosis.

