ABDOMINAL INJURY

Mechanism. Exam. Imaging.

Approach to Abdominal Injuries

1) Determine if patient needs emergency surgery now (hypotensive, obvious abdominal wall penetration, peritoneal signs)

2) FAST Scan: RUQ, LUQ, Suprapubic, Subxiphoid. See side column for more info

3) Consider the mechanism: Low risk (low speed MVA, falling down 2 steps) vs. High risk (Rollover MVA, falling off the roof)

4) Abdominal exam: normal vs. abnormal (pain, rigidity, rebound, guarding, bruising, distension, seat-belt sign)

5) Imaging: If high risk mechanism or abnormal physical exam → CT abdomen/pelvis with contrast.

6) If imaging normal but still have concerning mechanism and concerning physical exam → Admit for observation and serial abdominal exams.

References