



## Wilderness First Aid Scenario

**ABDOMINAL PROBLEMS (FEMALE)****Victim 1 – Youth with Abdominal Pain****SUMMARY**

You are on day two of a three-day backcountry hike with a coed Venturing crew. As you are making your way up a steep section of a climb, you notice that a 17-year-old female crew member starts to slow down and requests more stops from the group. She is adamant that “it is nothing” and it will “get better.” Upon further questioning, she shares that she woke up with abdominal cramping and started her period this morning. She states that she was prepared to “pack in and pack out” her feminine hygiene products but did not expect her cramps to be this bad. She says that “it didn’t hurt so much on the more level sections this morning.”

**SCENARIO DETAIL**

The crew is 15 miles from the nearest trailhead. The weather is in the 80s during the day and projected to be in the 60s at night. The crew has almost made it to the planned campsite for the night. The crew member states she can keep going until then. Other members of the crew offer to take some of the load from her pack until they make camp. The crew has two members trained in wilderness first aid (WFA), and there is a basic wilderness first-aid kit with the gear. At camp, someone states that they use a gallon-size freezer bag as an inexpensive “dry bag” to store some of their gear.

**STUDENT RESPONSE**

## 1. Scene safety:

Ensure that the scene safety assessment is completed. For this scenario, make sure the crew member is able to safely make it to the campsite.

## 2. Primary assessment:

The crew member is awake and alert but complaining of abdominal cramping.

## 3. Secondary assessment:

## a. Physical exam:

Subjective: Reports pain and “cramping” across lower abdomen. States it does get better with movement but still there.

Objective: Noted guarding of the abdomen with arm, sitting with knees to her chest.

## b. Vital signs:

LOC: AVPU x 4, no immediate life-threatening distress

Heart rate: 72 bpm

Respirations: 22/minute, even and unlabored

Skin: Temperature matches that of the person assessing her; skin color is as expected for her ethnicity.

No changes in vitals after primary assessment.

## b. SAMPLE:

S – As above

A – None

M – Normal menstrual cycle every 28-30 days

P – No past medical issues

L – Lunch with crew at 1:00 p.m. (four hours ago). Voided twice since lunch, pale urine.

E – Woke up and realized period had started today. Changing tampon every four hours.

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## **+** Wilderness First Aid Scenario **Abdominal Problems (Female)**

### POST-SCENARIO DEBRIEF

- What signs and symptoms did you find?

**Crew member may be shy about sharing complaints of discomfort. Abdominal cramping related to hormones; some relief may be provided by mild exercise.**

- What is the individual's problem?

**Abdominal cramping from menstrual cycle.**

- What other common backcountry issues can cause abdominal pain?

**There are many possible causes of abdominal pain, some serious and some not. Pinpointing the cause may be difficult, but WFA for abdominal complaints is usually similar. Other common causes of abdominal pain can include the following: Nausea and vomiting can occur with mild altitude sickness, motion sickness, brain injury, intestinal viruses, eating or drinking too much, or being emotionally upset. Diarrhea often results from poor camp hygiene. Constipation is often due to changes in diet, fluid intake, activity, or emotional state. Serious abdominal complaints to consider would include appendicitis, ruptured ovarian cyst, pregnancy, hernia, and others. Abdominal issues in the backcountry can be tricky to identify. Continue to monitor the person even after initial treatment in the event the assessment changes.**

- How would you provide care?

**The crew can lighten the load she needs to carry – gentle exercise can help with menstrual cramps. Administer NSAID medication as directed if it is in the WFA kit and AMHR gives permission from parent. Once in camp, you can create a heating pad with clothing/camp towels and gallon-size freezer bag – place folded clothing in the freezer bag, heat water (below boiling – dish water temp), and pour into bag just enough to saturate clothing. Cover the freezer bag with another thin piece of cloth and hold to lower abdomen for 20 minutes. Wring out the clothes when cool and replace water with more hot water to use again for 20 minutes.**

- What would happen if this were left untreated?

**Crew member may continue to slow down crew.**

- Does this situation require evacuation?

**No. Mild to moderate exercise can release natural endorphins. The NSAID medication can help ease pain, and the heating pad can decrease cramps by encouraging blood flow to the area. However, evacuation may be needed if you suspect that something more worrisome is present due to persistent abdominal discomfort. Rapid evacuation is indicated if signs or symptoms suggest a serious abdominal problem.**

- How could this scenario have been avoided?

**Consider discussing this issue as part of the pre-hike preparation so the crew members are more comfortable sharing information with the adult Advisor.**

Other questions to consider asking:

- **Did the crew prepare well for the event? What first-aid/WFA training did they have?**
- **What would the crew have done if they didn't have a copy of the victim's AHMR?**