



Figure 1. Chest radiograph (posterior-anterior view) showing loops of large bowel projecting over the right hemithorax (arrow).

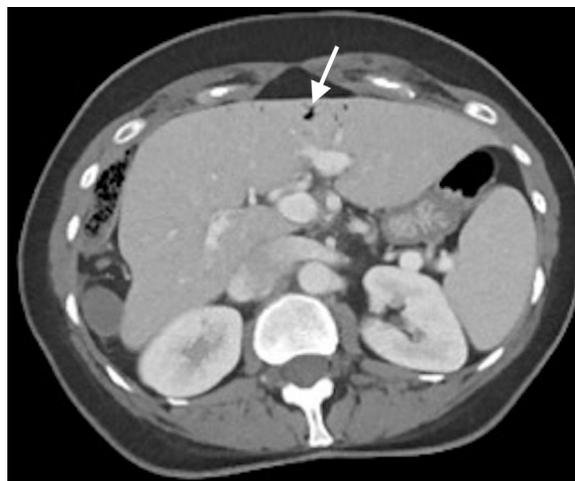


Figure 3. CT of the abdomen and pelvis (axial view) showing portal venous gas (arrow).

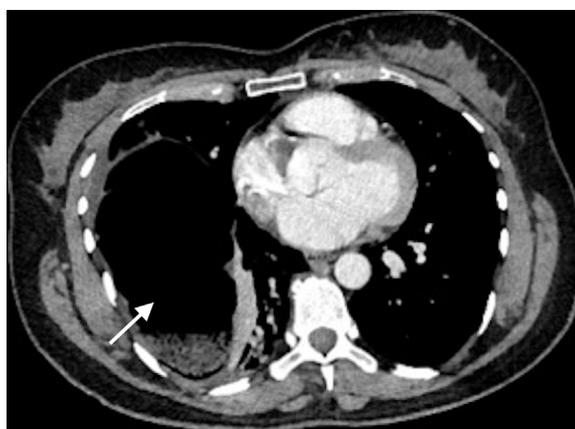


Figure 2. CT of the abdomen and pelvis (axial view) showing herniation of the colon into the right hemithorax (arrow).

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A 43-year-old woman with no significant medical history presented to our emergency department (ED) with 1 week of right upper quadrant abdominal pain. The patient denied any history of trauma or abdominal surgeries. She initially presented 5 days before to another ED, received a diagnosis of pneumonia, and was treated with antibiotics, but had no improvement. On physical examination, the patient was afebrile, was hemodynamically stable, and had mild right upper quadrant abdominal tenderness. Chest radiography was performed (Figure 1). Computed tomography (CT) scans of the chest, abdomen, and pelvis were subsequently performed (Figure 2).

For the diagnosis and teaching points, see page 646.

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DIAGNOSIS:

Spontaneous diaphragmatic hernia with colonic incarceration. The chest radiograph (Figure 1) and chest CT (Figure 2) demonstrated findings of bowel herniation through the diaphragm on the right side. CT scan of the abdomen and pelvis (Figure 3) showed portal venous gas, concerning for bowel incarceration and colonic ischemia. The patient was taken to the operating room for urgent surgery and had reduction of her right-sided diaphragmatic hernia, primary diaphragmatic repair, and a right-sided hemicolectomy with ileocolic anastomosis. She was discharged home later that week without complications.

Spontaneous diaphragmatic hernia is a rare surgical emergency; its incidence is unknown.^{1,2} Most diaphragmatic hernia cases occur in neonates or in the setting of trauma, and are less likely to be spontaneous in adults. Physical examination findings can include absent breath sounds unilaterally, nausea, and vomiting. Treatment involves urgent operative repair.

Author affiliations: From the Department of Emergency Medicine, Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.

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