Abdominal Pain H & P

These are questions that could be pertinent in an abdominal pain case. These questions help with differential diagnosis. Obviously, you might not be able to ask all of these and do a physical exam in 15 minutes, and you probably don’t need to do so in every case, but at least consider these. You might need to adapt some of the terms to help the patient understand your questions.

1. When did pain start?
2. How would you describe the pain?
3. How often does the pain occur?
4. Where is it located?
5. Does it travel (radiate) anywhere?
6. Does it come and go, or is it constant?
7. What makes it better?
8. What makes it worse?
9. Have you had any recent abdominal surgery? (risk for infection, complications)
10. Have you had any past abdominal surgery? (risk for adhesions)
11. What medications are you on? (risk for GI side effects, ileus)
12. Have you traveled recently? (risk for infectious disease, hepatitis)
13. Have you been around anyone with similar symptoms?
14. Have you eaten anything out of the ordinary?
15. Do you drink alcohol (how much)?
16. Are you sexually active? (ask about exposure, protection, number of partners)
17. Have you used IV drugs?
18. Is there a family history of bowel cancer or inflammatory bowel disease?
19. Have you ever had pain like this before?
20. If so, how long have you been having the pain?
21. Have you had changes in bowel habits?
22. Have you had blood in your BM? (hemorrhoids, polyps, cancer, IBD)
23. Have you had black stools? (upper GI bleeding)
24. When was your last menstrual period? (ectopic pregnancy, functioning cyst)
25. Are you using birth control? (ectopic)
26. Could you be pregnant? (ectopic)
27. Have you had swelling in your abdomen? (mass, fluid, pregnancy)
28. Have you had any injuries recently?
29. Have you ever been told that you had a large spleen?
30. Have you ever had stomach or duodenal ulcer?
31. Have you ever had gallstones?
32. Is your pain related to eating? (e.g. gastritis, ulcer, IBS, IBD)
33. Have you had fever?
34. Have you taken steroids, ibuprofen, or aspirin?
35. Are your immunizations up to date?
36. Have you ever had high cholesterol or triglycerides? (contributors to pancreatitis)
37. Have you ever had diverticulosis?
38. Have you ever had irritable bowel syndrome?
39. Have you had nausea or vomiting?
40. Have you had constipation?
41. Have you had diarrhea?
42. Have you had heart disease or chest pain? (could be confused with indigestion)
43. Have you had shortness of breath?
44. Have you had weight loss or decrease in appetite?
45. Have you had heartburn or reflux symptoms?
46. Have you had trouble swallowing?
47. Have you had yellow eyes or skin? (hepatobiliary disease)
48. Have you had changes in urine (color or smell?) (UTI)
49. Have you seen blood in your urine? (stones)
50. Have you had bleeding after menopause? (CA)
51. Have you had vaginal discharge? (STD)

Physical exam:

VS
General appearance
Level of distress
Heart
Lungs
Abdomen: appearance, shape, distention, bowel sounds, bruits, tenderness (type (e.g. direct, rebound) and location), HSM, mass, other maneuvers (e.g. Murphy’s, Rovsing, heel tap, obturator, Psoas) [See your mini-CEX]

Skin (jaundice, pallor)

www.rightdiagnosis.com