

Distension

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In the small bowel the degree of distension is dependent on the site of the obstruction and is greater the more distal the lesion. Visible peristalsis may be present in thin patients (Figure 78.8). This can sometimes be provoked by "tapping" the abdominal wall. Distension is a later feature in colonic obstruction and may be minimal or absent in the presence of mesenteric vascular occlusion.

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