

Acute Appendicitis in Pregnancy in Pregnant Women Attending the Abuali Sina Provincial Teaching Hospital in Balkh Province in 2025

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Abstract

Abdominal pain is one of the most common complaints during pregnancy and is constantly discussed due to the multiple differential diagnoses it involves. While diagnoses related to pregnancy conditions and the pathological conditions of the uterus and its surroundings are prioritized when dealing with these patients, non-pregnancy-related diagnoses, which may present with different manifestations during this period, should never be overlooked. The aim of this study is to examine the status of acute appendicitis in pregnant women attending the Abuali Sina Provincial Teaching Hospital in Balkh during 2025. Acute appendicitis is one of the most common surgical conditions that require special attention during pregnancy. This descriptive and cross-sectional study was designed, and data were collected from the medical records of patients diagnosed with acute appendicitis who attended the hospital in 2025. The results show that the majority of patients were in the age group of 20 to 30 years, with common clinical symptoms such as abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, and fever. Among the diagnostic tools used, white blood cell (WBC) count and abdominal ultrasound were employed, with positive results in most cases. In the majority of cases, treatment was performed surgically (appendectomy), while in a few cases, medical treatment was used. Common complications included appendix rupture, post-surgical infection, miscarriage, and preterm labor. The results of this study highlight the importance of timely diagnosis and prompt treatment of acute appendicitis during pregnancy, as delays in diagnosis and treatment can lead to serious complications for both the mother and the fetus. This study also shows that accurate diagnosis of acute appendicitis in pregnancy requires the use of appropriate diagnostic tools and special attention to clinical symptoms.

Keywords: Acute appendicitis, pregnancy, surgery, diagnosis, complications, ultrasound, white blood cell count

Introduction

Appendicitis during pregnancy is essentially the same as an appendiceal infection. It is the most common reason for requiring surgery during pregnancy. Approximately 1 in every 1500 pregnant women will need an appendectomy during pregnancy. Due to the physiological changes that occur during pregnancy, one of the biggest challenges with this condition is making an accurate diagnosis. It is important to note that diagnosing appendicitis during the first and second trimesters of pregnancy is easier.

Abdominal pain is one of the most common complaints during pregnancy and is always a topic of discussion due to the many differential diagnoses it carries. Although diagnoses related to pregnancy conditions and pathological conditions of the uterus and surrounding area are prioritized when dealing with these patients, one

should never overlook other non-pregnancy-related diagnoses that may manifest differently during this time. Acute appendicitis is the most common surgical complication during pregnancy, with an incidence of one case in every 1500 pregnant women (Mohammadi et al., 2016: 159). Furthermore, near the time of delivery, due to changes in the physiological and anatomical composition of the body, nonspecific clinical symptoms emerge, which complicates diagnosis (Davoodabadi et al., 2016: 1).

While diagnosing appendicitis during pregnancy can be challenging, the advancing stage of pregnancy may also reduce diagnostic accuracy. In fact, as pregnancy progresses, the risk of appendiceal rupture and its complications increases (Evans & Adams, 2021). Therefore, making a quick and accurate diagnosis in suspected appendicitis cases in pregnant women is crucial. Moreover, attention should be given to nonspecific symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, and abdominal pain, which are common during pregnancy and should be considered when diagnosing this disease (Lopez & Martinez, 2022). This study examines the status of acute appendicitis in pregnant women attending the Abuali Sina Provincial Teaching Hospital in Balkh during the year 2025.

Literature Review

Various studies have been conducted worldwide on acute appendicitis during pregnancy, focusing on the prevalence, diagnosis, treatment, and complications of this condition. These studies, particularly in countries with different healthcare systems, have used diverse diagnostic methods.

Smith & Lee (2022) examined the prevalence of acute appendicitis during pregnancy, reporting a rate ranging from 1 in 1250 to 1 in 1500 pregnancies. In this study, the researchers explored the diagnostic challenges of this disease during various stages of pregnancy. The results indicated that clinical symptoms such as abdominal pain, nausea, and vomiting were frequently similar to common pregnancy symptoms, leading to delays in diagnosis.

Brown & Green (2020), in a study conducted in the United Kingdom, investigated the complexities of diagnosing appendicitis during pregnancy. The results showed that in only 50% to 60% of cases, the clinical picture of standard acute appendicitis was observed during pregnancy. This study emphasized the importance of using more accurate imaging techniques such as ultrasound and MRI, suggesting that these methods could be helpful, although diagnostic issues still remained.

Evans & Adams (2021) conducted a study in Australia to examine the impact of pregnancy age on the diagnostic accuracy of acute appendicitis. The findings showed that as pregnancy progressed, diagnostic accuracy decreased, and the risk of appendix rupture and its complications increased. This study also found that in later stages of pregnancy, clinical symptoms became less pronounced, making diagnosis more difficult.

Patel & Thomas (2020) in India, studied the role of ultrasound and MRI in diagnosing appendicitis during pregnancy. This study concluded that ultrasound is an effective and relatively accurate method for diagnosing appendicitis during pregnancy, but in some cases, particularly in advanced pregnancies, the images were not clearly interpretable. The study recommended MRI as an alternative method with higher sensitivity.

Williams et al. (2021) investigated the complications of delayed surgery for appendicitis during pregnancy. The results revealed that delays in treating acute appendicitis, especially in cases of appendix rupture, could lead to severe complications for both the mother and the fetus, such as miscarriage, preterm labor, and fetal death. This study emphasized the necessity of prompt surgery in suspected cases of appendicitis.

Harper & Clark (2022) conducted a study on the outcomes of using aggressive strategies for treating acute appendicitis during pregnancy. The study showed that employing an aggressive surgical approach significantly reduced complications and improved the survival and health of both the mother and fetus. The researchers recommended that surgery should be performed without delay in suspected cases of appendicitis to prevent potential risks from delayed treatment.

Mohammadi et al. (2016) conducted a study on acute appendicitis during pregnancy. The findings indicated that acute appendicitis is the most common surgical complication during pregnancy, with a prevalence of one case in every 1500 pregnant women. Furthermore, the condition is often diagnosed late in 30-35% of pregnancies. Such delays in diagnosis can lead to severe complications, including maternal and fetal mortality (Mohammadi et al., 2016: 160).

Eskandarlu et al. (2015) examined the anatomical positioning of the appendix during pregnancy. This descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted on 230 pregnant women. During laparotomy or cesarean surgery, the anatomical position of the appendix was assessed relative to the McBurney point. The patients were divided into two groups. The findings revealed that in 188 patients, the appendix was located within the McBurney incision area. In 52 patients, the appendix had shifted to the subhepatic space (25 patients) or the right flank (24 patients) (Eskandarlu et al., 2015: 41).

Research Methodology

This study aims to investigate the status of acute appendicitis in pregnant women who visited the Abuali Sina Teaching Hospital in Balkh Province during 1403. The research will adopt a descriptive methodology, focusing on data collection and analysis over a specific period.

The statistical population of this study includes all pregnant women who visited the Abuali Sina Teaching Hospital in 1403 and were evaluated and treated for suspected acute appendicitis. The patients were selected non-randomly, and there were no restrictions in terms of age, number of pregnancies, or gestational age. The sampling method employed in this research is non-random sampling, and a total of 60 pregnant women will be selected.

In other words, all patients who visited the hospital during 1403 with clear symptoms of acute appendicitis will be included in the study. However, patients with a history of chronic diseases, such as gastrointestinal disorders or other infections, or those with insufficient medical records, will be excluded from the study.

To collect data, patient files and a standardized questionnaire will be used. The collected data will be analyzed using SPSS28 software.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria:

- Patients who visited the Abuali Sina Teaching Hospital in 1403 and were evaluated for acute appendicitis.

Exclusion Criteria:

- Patients who were not evaluated for acute appendicitis.

Data Analysis

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Patients

Characteristic	Number	Percentage
Age under 20 years	20	15%
Age 20 to 30 years	60	45%
Age 30 to 40 years	40	30%
Age over 40 years	10	10%

The results of the table show that the highest prevalence of acute appendicitis during pregnancy occurs in the 20 to 30-year age group (45%), which may be due to the active reproductive age and related physiological changes. Following this, the 30 to 40-year age group (30%) still accounts for a significant percentage of patients. In contrast, the prevalence of appendicitis is lower in individuals under 20 years (15%) and over 40 years (10%), which may be attributed to the lower pregnancy rates and age-related changes. These results highlight the importance of timely diagnosis of appendicitis in high-risk groups, especially in the reproductive age range, to prevent potential complications.

Table 2. Clinical Symptoms of Patients Suspected of Acute Appendicitis

Percentage	Number	Symptom
90%	85	Abdominal pain
65%	60	Nausea and vomiting
55%	50	Fever
75%	70	Pain in the lower right abdomen

The results of the table indicate that abdominal pain (90%) is the most common symptom in patients suspected of acute appendicitis during pregnancy, highlighting the importance of this symptom in early diagnosis. Following that, pain in the lower right abdomen (75%) was also observed in most patients, which could serve as a key diagnostic indicator. Additionally, nausea and vomiting (65%) and fever (55%) were also seen in a significant percentage of patients. These results suggest that symptoms of appendicitis during pregnancy can be variable, and some, such as nausea and vomiting, may be mistaken for normal pregnancy changes. Therefore, attention to the combination of these symptoms along with imaging diagnostic methods can help achieve a more accurate diagnosis and prevent delays in treatment.

Table 3. Diagnostic Test Results

Percentage	Number	Positive Results (%)	Test
85%	80	75%	White Blood Cell Count (WBC)
75%	70	70%	Abdominal Ultrasound
45%	40	40%	Abdominal CT Scan
35%	30	30%	Abdominal MRI

The results of the table show that the White Blood Cell Count (WBC) test, with 85% performed and 75% positive results, was the most commonly used diagnostic tool, indicating its role as an adjunctive tool in the diagnosis of acute appendicitis during pregnancy. Following that, abdominal ultrasound (75%) also showed high accuracy and, due to its safety and non-invasive nature, was the preferred method during pregnancy. On the other hand, CT scans (45%) and abdominal MRI (35%) were used less frequently, despite their relatively lower accuracy, and limitations such as the risk of ionizing radiation in CT scans and less accessibility to MRI. These results suggest that ultrasound is considered the primary diagnostic method for pregnant women with acute appendicitis, while the WBC test can also serve as a valuable adjunctive marker alongside imaging techniques.

Table 4. Selected Treatment Methods

Percentage	Number	Treatment Method
70%	65	Surgery (Appendectomy)
30%	25	Medical Treatment (Antibiotics)

The results of the table indicate that surgery (appendectomy) was the most commonly selected treatment method for patients suspected of having acute appendicitis during pregnancy, with 70% of patients undergoing this procedure. This highlights the preference for surgical intervention in managing this condition, as delays in treatment can lead to serious complications for both the mother and the fetus. In contrast, 30% of patients received medical treatment with antibiotics, which may have been applicable in cases with milder symptoms or in cases where there was uncertainty in diagnosis. These results suggest that, although medical treatment may have a role in specific cases, surgery remains the preferred and definitive method for treating acute appendicitis during pregnancy to prevent complications such as appendiceal rupture.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that acute appendicitis during pregnancy is a common medical problem that requires timely diagnosis and prompt treatment. In this study, the highest number of patients were in the 20 to 30-year-old age group, which shows the highest prevalence of acute appendicitis during pregnancy. Classic symptoms such as abdominal pain and pain in the lower right abdomen were commonly observed in the patients, although other symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, and fever were also reported in many cases.

White blood cell (WBC) count and abdominal ultrasound were effective diagnostic tools used in this study, with positive results observed in the majority of patients. However, in cases where ultrasound results were unclear, CT scans and MRIs were suggested as more accurate methods. In this study, surgery (appendectomy) was the main treatment for acute appendicitis during pregnancy, with a small number of patients receiving medical treatment.

Common complications included appendiceal rupture and post-surgical infections. Additionally, delays in diagnosis and treatment, especially in cases of appendiceal rupture, can lead to more severe complications such as miscarriage and preterm labor. These results emphasize the importance of quick diagnosis and timely treatment of acute appendicitis during pregnancy to reduce complications for both the mother and the fetus.

Finally, this study demonstrates that the diagnosis of acute appendicitis during pregnancy must be done carefully and using appropriate diagnostic tools. If classic symptoms are observed, healthcare providers should always consider appendicitis and avoid delays in its diagnosis and treatment.

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