

BOWEL SOUNDS

BOWEL SOUNDS ARE CAUSED BY AIR AND LIQUIDS MOVING THROUGH THE GASTROINTESTINAL TRACT.

Procedure

1. Place the patient in Supine position with knees flexed.
2. Warm the diaphragm in your palm.
3. Place it on the beginning quadrant. (The abdomen is divided mentally into four quadrants, you may start in the RLQ and proceed counter clockwise. See drawing. Or begin in any quadrant and listen to all four)
4. Listen for 3-5 minutes, in each quadrant before concluding absent sounds.
5. Document the presence or absence of sounds.

Normal bowel sounds are high pitched gurgling noises that occur approximately every 5 to 15 seconds. The frequency of sounds is related to presence of food in the GI tract or to the state of digestion.

Terms

Hyperactive bowel sounds --- Loud, gurgling rushed sounds

Hypoactive bowel sounds --- Soft, low, widely separated sounds such as one or two occurring in two minutes.

Absent sounds --- when sounds are not heard for 3-5 minutes of auscultating in each quadrant. Report this immediately as it may be a complication such as intestinal obstruction, peritonitis or paralytic ileus,

