

The Royal College of Emergency Medicine

Clinical Learning Case

August 2018

COCAINE
INDUCED
BOWEL
ISCHAEMIA

$$H_3C-N$$

39 YEAR OLD FIT AND HEALTHY BODYBUILDER DIED FROM SEPSIS AS A RESULT OF BOWEL MUCOSA ISCHAEMIA

COCAINE can cause non-obstructive mesenteric ischaemia presenting as:

- ACUTE MESENTERIC ISCHAEMIA
- ISCHAEMIC COLITIS

BREAKDOWN OF THE MUCOSAL BARRIER CAN CAUSE TRANSLOCATION OF GUT BACTERIA AND RESULTING SEPSIS

Learning Points:

- Cocaine should be considered an independent risk factor for sepsis
- Cocaine can cause ischaemic injury to the gut, myocardium, & spinal cord
- Bowel ischaemia usually presents with abdominal pain out of proportion to the findings on physical examination

For RCEM issued Safety Alerts and Safety Newsflashes see: www.rcem.ac.uk/safetyalerts