12.2: Gastrointestinal Basics

It is important for the nurse to be aware of the underlying structures of the abdomen when completing a gastrointestinal or genitourinary assessment. See Figure \(\PageIndex{1}\)\(^1\) for an illustration of the gastrointestinal system and the bladder. See Figure \(\PageIndex{2}\)\(^2\) for an illustration of the male urinary system. Know the position of the organs within the abdominal cavity as you learn to auscultate, palpate, and percuss the abdomen.

Figure \(\PageIndex{1}\): Gastrointestinal System
Note

For a detailed overview of the gastrointestinal system, common GI disorders, and related GI medications, visit the “Gastrointestinal” chapter of the Open RN Nursing Pharmacology textbook. Specific sections of the chapter include the following:

- **GI System Review** for additional review of the anatomy of the GI system
- **Antidiarrheals and Laxatives** for more information about treating diarrhea and constipation
- **Antiemetics** for more information about treating nausea and vomiting
- **Hyperacidity and Acid Controlling Medication** for more information about treating acid reflux and gastric ulcers

1. “abdomen-intestine-large-small-1698565” by bodymybody is licensed under [CC0](http://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/)
2. “Urinary_System_(Male).png” by BruceBlaus is licenced under [CC BY-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

Figure \(\PageIndex{2}\): Male Urinary System