

A pregnant woman with shortness of breath

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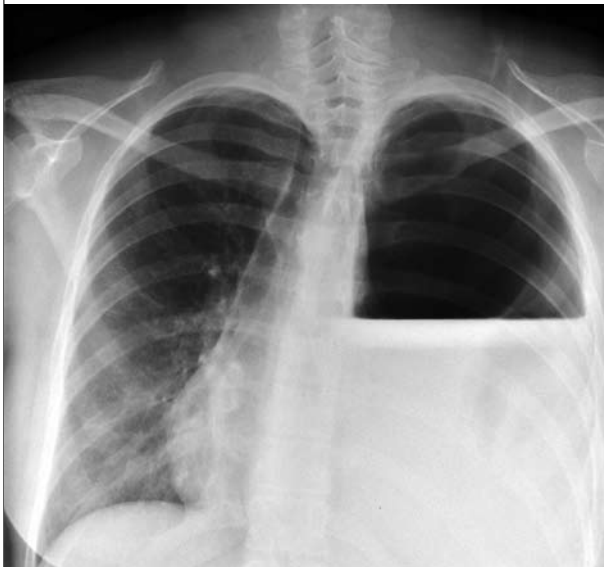
CASE REPORT

A 26-year-old woman who was five months pregnant (gravida 1, para 0) presented to the emergency department complaining progressive shortness of breath, left-sided chest pain, nausea and vomiting for the last few weeks. Eight years before, after a skiing accident, she had suffered a paralysis of the left hemidiaphragm (no rupture). Physical examination revealed absent breath sounds in the left hemithorax. The oxygen saturation was 90%. The chest radiograph is shown in *figure 1*.

WHAT IS YOUR DIAGNOSIS?

See page 95 for the answer to this photo quiz.

Figure 1. *Chest radiograph*



ANSWER TO PHOTO QUIZ (ON PAGE 84)
A PREGNANT WOMAN WITH SHORTNESS OF BREATH

DIAGNOSIS

The chest radiograph was interpreted as showing a left pneumothorax with pleural fluid, so a chest tube was placed (2nd intercostal space ventrally). After insertion the tube returned air and (later) scant yellow fluid. Biochemical investigation of this fluid showed a pH of 3.3. A chest CT scan performed immediately thereafter showed a ruptured left hemidiaphragm with an intrathoracic stomach and bowel (*figure 2*). An urgent laparotomy was carried out. On operation, an enormously dilated stomach, part of the intestine, colon and the spleen had herniated into the thorax. The collapsed left lung was small and pale. The ruptured diaphragm and perforated stomach were repaired. After surgery, the lung re-expanded and the patient recovered uneventfully.

Diagnosis: diaphragm rupture with intrathoracic stomach.

Figure 2. Chest CT scan showing a dilated intrathoracic stomach

