

Ascites

fluid in the abdomen



When to get medical attention:

Go to the nearest emergency department, or have someone call 911 if:

- You have new or sharp pain in your belly or chest that doesn't go away
- You have a fever
- You have trouble breathing
- You have severe nausea and vomiting

What is Ascites?

Ascites occurs when the pressure in the vein carrying blood to the liver gets too high and fluid leaks out and builds up in the belly. Fluid can also buildup in the space around your lungs (called pleural effusion or hepatic hydrothorax).



Treatment:

1. Low Sodium (Salt) Diet

Too much sodium can make your body hold on to extra fluid. Eating foods with less sodium can help control ascites.

- Aim to eat less than 2000 mg of sodium a day.
- One teaspoon of salt has about 2300 mg of sodium.

Tips to reduce sodium:

- Don't add salt to your food
- Choose fresh, unprocessed, and homemade foods
- Eat less processed, packaged, or restaurant foods
- Limit condiments and sauces (ketchup, mustard, soy sauce, gravies, salad dressings)

2. Diuretic medicines (water pills):

Diuretics (water pills) help get rid of the fluid that has built up in the belly and other parts of the body.

- It is important to weigh yourself daily to see if the diuretics are working
- Have your blood work checked as recommended by your healthcare team because diuretics can effect your kidneys and electrolyte levels
- Your dose of diuretics can be adjusted by your Primary Care Provider or liver specialist if you are losing weight too quickly, having side effects, or they don't seem to be working

⚠️ Discuss with your Primary Care Provider or liver specialist if;

- Your weight has increased by more than 2lbs on two consecutive days or 5lbs in a week
- You have lost more than 5-7lbs in a week
- You are peeing less
- You feel dizzy or lightheaded

3. Paracentesis:

Paracentesis is a procedure used to remove the fluid in your belly if it is a large amount and the diuretics do not work, or you are unable to take diuretics.

4. TIPS

(A shunt used to decrease pressure in the portal vein):

In more severe cases, a TIPS procedure may be needed to stop ascites from building up. This is a procedure done by an interventional radiologist in a specialized hospital.

Getting started:

- Get a scale and weigh yourself regularly
- Put your diuretics (water pills) in a place where you will remember to take them.
- Figure out how much sodium is in the food you are eating (read labels) and how to achieve 2 grams per day.



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