



GastroDoxs
— defenders of the digestive system —

Ascites

A Practical Guide For Patients

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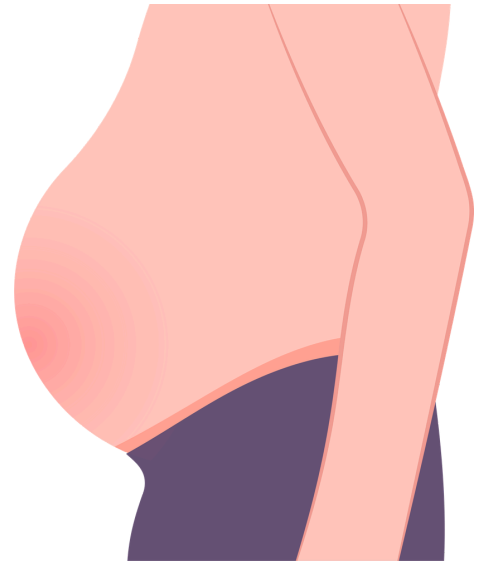
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Introduction: **Ascites**

Ascites is the abnormal buildup of fluid in the abdomen, causing swelling and discomfort. It is most often linked to liver disease, especially cirrhosis, but can also occur due to heart failure, kidney disease, cancer, or infections. The fluid buildup increases pressure in the abdomen, which may make breathing difficult and affect digestion. Early diagnosis and treatment are important to relieve symptoms, prevent complications, and address the underlying cause.



Key Takeaways

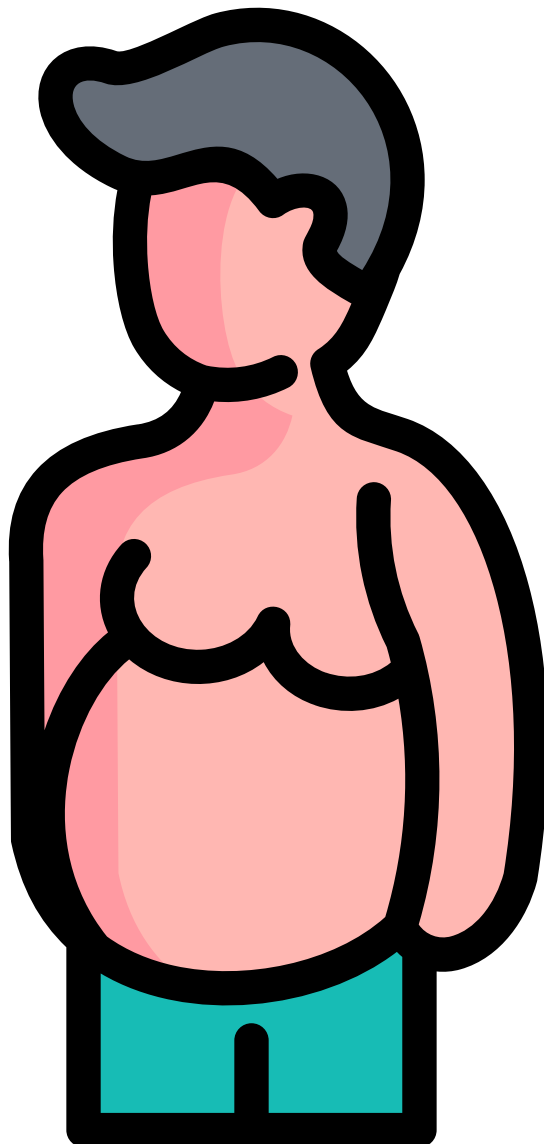
- Refers to abnormal fluid accumulation in the abdomen.
- Most often caused by liver disease or cirrhosis.
- Symptoms include abdominal swelling, discomfort, and shortness of breath.
- Requires diagnosis to identify and treat the underlying condition.
- Treatment may include medication, drainage, or surgery.



What Causes **Ascites**?

Known Causes

The most common cause is liver cirrhosis, which increases pressure in the blood vessels of the liver (portal hypertension) and causes fluid leakage. Other causes include heart failure, kidney failure, cancers that spread to the abdomen, pancreatitis, and certain infections like tuberculosis.



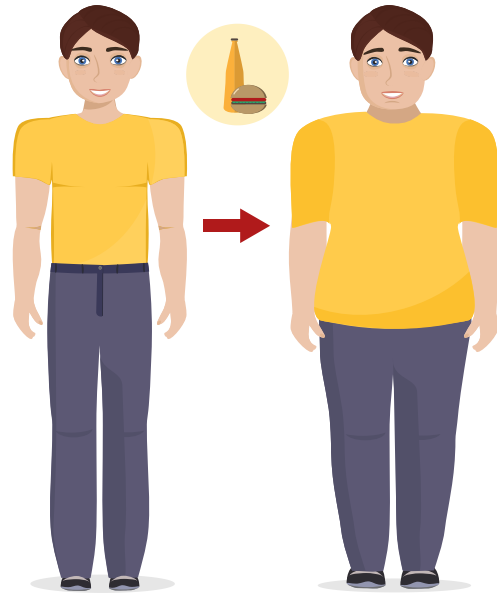
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Common Signs & Symptoms

Common symptoms include abdominal swelling, weight gain from fluid buildup, bloating, shortness of breath, loss of appetite, and discomfort or pain in the abdomen.

Core Symptoms Include:

- Visible abdominal swelling
- Rapid weight gain
- Feeling full quickly after eating
- Bloating and discomfort
- Shortness of breath
- Reduced appetite



Severe cases can also cause:



- Difficulty breathing due to pressure on the lungs
- Abdominal pain
- Fluid leakage through the skin (rare)
- Infections in the fluid (spontaneous bacterial peritonitis)
- Kidney dysfunction
- Malnutrition



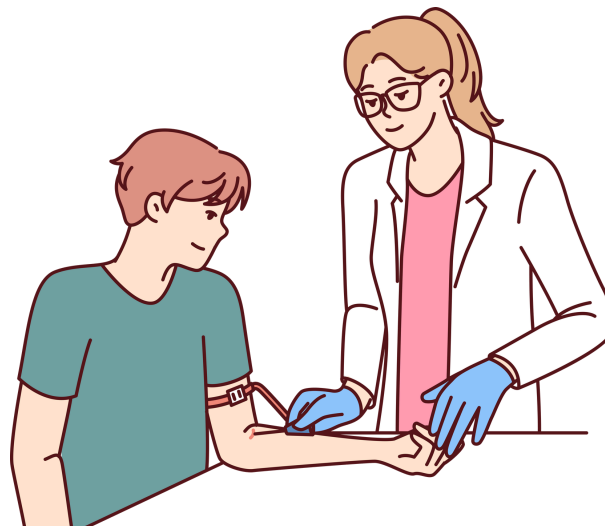
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Diagnosis & Medical Testing

Diagnosis involves physical examination, imaging tests, and analysis of abdominal fluid obtained through paracentesis to determine the cause and guide treatment.

Diagnostic Tools

- **Physical examination** – Detects abdominal swelling and fluid movement
- **Ultrasound** – Confirms fluid presence and estimates volume
- **CT scan or MRI** – Evaluates abdominal organs and underlying disease
- **Paracentesis** – Fluid sampling to identify infection or cancer cells
- **Blood tests** – Check liver, kidney, and heart function



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Diet

A diet for ascites focuses on limiting salt intake to reduce fluid buildup, maintaining adequate protein, and avoiding alcohol, especially in liver-related cases.

Key Insights

- Limit sodium to less than 2,000 mg daily
- Avoid processed and packaged foods high in salt
- Eat fresh fruits and vegetables
- Include lean proteins like fish, chicken, and legumes
- Avoid alcohol entirely
- Stay hydrated unless fluid restriction is advised



Medications & Treatment Options

Treatment may involve diuretics to remove excess fluid, paracentesis for large volumes, and addressing the underlying cause such as liver, heart, or kidney disease.

Treatment Options

- **Diuretics** – Spironolactone, furosemide to reduce fluid buildup
- **Paracentesis** – Removes large amounts of fluid
- **Antibiotics** – For fluid infections
- **Treat underlying cause** – Liver, heart, or kidney disease
- **Lifestyle changes** – Salt restriction, no alcohol



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Advanced Therapies & Procedures

Severe or recurrent ascites may require procedures like TIPS (Transjugular Intrahepatic Portosystemic Shunt) to reduce portal hypertension or surgery for certain cancers.

Therapy Options

- **TIPS procedure** – Improves blood flow in the liver
- **Surgical shunts** – Alternative to TIPS in select cases
- **Liver transplant** – For end-stage liver disease
- **Long-term paracentesis** – For repeated fluid removal
- **Cancer treatment** – If ascites is cancer-related



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Coping With **Ascites**

Coping involves following a low-sodium diet, taking medications as prescribed, attending regular follow-ups, and monitoring abdominal swelling and weight changes.

Practical Strategies

- **Follow a low-salt eating plan**
- **Take diuretics exactly as prescribed**
- **Weigh yourself daily to track fluid changes**
- **Monitor for signs of infection**
- **Keep follow-up appointments**
- **Avoid alcohol**



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FAQS About Ascites



Q1: Is ascites always caused by liver disease?

A: No, it can also be caused by heart failure, kidney disease, cancer, or infections.

Q2: Can ascites be cured?

A: Treatment can relieve symptoms, but curing ascites depends on treating the underlying cause.

Q3: How is fluid removed?

A: Through a procedure called paracentesis, where a needle drains the fluid from the abdomen.

Q4: Can diet help manage ascites?

A: Yes, limiting salt is key to controlling fluid buildup.



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Take **Action**

If you experience ascites, don't ignore them. Early diagnosis and treatment can prevent complications. Schedule a consultation with GastroDoxs for expert guidance on managing your digestive health.

Visit GastroDoxs.com to schedule an appointment and access more resources on digestive health.

**Your health matters—
take the next step today!**

SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT

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