

Ascites

say **uh-sy-tees**

Ascites causes swelling and bloating from fluid leaking into your tummy. Your tummy might feel hard like a football. Or it might move like waves when you press it.

Ascites can happen if you have lots of damage and scars in your liver. This is a stage of liver disease called cirrhosis (say **si-row-sis**). Once you have had ascites you are likely to have it again. Treatment and cutting down on salt can help stop it coming back.

Bacteria can infect the fluid. This is called spontaneous bacterial peritonitis (SBP).

How is ascites treated

A nurse or doctor will draw a small sample of fluid for testing in first-time ascites. Or if they need to check anything about your condition. For example, checking for a bacterial infection or to find out what has caused the ascites.

Large ascites can be drained by a nurse or doctor. You might hear this being called large volume paracentesis or LVP. You can have a drain as a day-case (outpatient) or while you are admitted on a ward.

1. You may have an ultrasound scan to see how much fluid there is. And where to put the tube that will drain it.
2. You have a local anaesthetic to numb the area where the drain will go.
3. The nurse or doctor uses a needle to put the drain into your tummy.
4. The drain is stuck to your skin with a dressing. And joined to a bag to collect the fluid coming out. The fluid can be clear, straw-coloured, or have blood in it.
5. You will usually have a drip with albumin, a protein solution, to replace lost fluid.
6. Having the fluid drained usually takes 4 to 6 hours. Then the drain is removed.

You will be given antibiotics if you have an infection. And in some cases you might have antibiotics to stop you getting one.



Liver UK is the new name
for the British Liver Trust
and Children's Liver
Disease Foundation

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What can I do to help myself?

Cutting down on salt helps stop fluid building up.

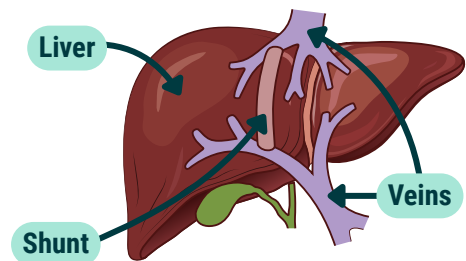
- Do not add salt to your food.
- Choose foods with no added salt – look for the green traffic light label.

Ask your doctor or nurse if there is anything else you can do.

What other treatment might I have for ascites?

Your doctor might prescribe you water tablets. These are also called diuretics. They help you pee more so fluid doesn't build up. Ascites can stop responding to treatment. Doctors call this refractory ascites. People with this type of ascites may need to go into hospital every few weeks to have the fluid drained.

You might be able to have an operation to put a special pipe called a shunt into your liver. This is called **TIPSS (Transjugular Intrahepatic PortoSystemic Shunt)**. It helps blood flow through your liver more easily.

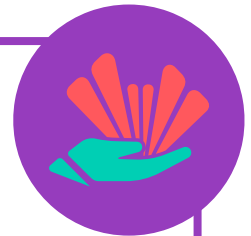


Not everyone is able to have TIPSS. It can have harmful side effects, especially in people with more advanced cirrhosis. Some people with ascites need to have a liver transplant assessment. Especially if their liver disease is causing other problems. Ask your doctor if you want to know more.

How we can help

The Liver UK support team are here for you and for your family and friends. Find out more more at **liveruk.org/support**

Call our nurse-led helpline to talk to one of our team: **0800 652 7330**



More information about cirrhosis and liver disease

Cirrhosis has lots of causes. It is a serious condition but people can live for years with cirrhosis and may not have any symptoms. Treatment can help to manage cirrhosis, stop it getting worse and keep you as healthy as possible. Your doctors and nurses can help you understand what's happening.

