

## 58 ASCIT

### • What is ascites, symptoms and causes

- Ascites are fluid retention in the abdomen. The fluid can move, which can be identified by **turning the patient from one side to the other** in a lying position. It also can be felt with hand – if you press the abdomen even slightly, but more sharply from one side, vibrations can be felt on the other side, caused by "shock waves" of the fluid. These symptoms are not present in the other conditions of **bloated stomach**– due to pregnancy, *obesity, cancerous diseases and pancreatic cysts*, etc. When the **ascites fluid** is little – less than half a liter, there are no clear symptoms. Therefore, for a period of time, the patient believes that the bloated stomach is due to weight gain or **due to gases**. **Over** time, however, the accumulation of fluid increases and in some patients it can reach over 15 liters. So, as **ascites progresses**, the bloated stomach is clearly visible. The umbilicus is plumped, but from the pressure an umbilical hernia may occur. The skin is **shiny and stretched**, the **hips are plumped**, as men suffer from **hair loss in this area**.
- The weight gain is concentrated in the bloated abdomen and the fluid in it, as the other parts of the **body are getting thinner**, especially the limbs, as the **legs are swollen**. Moreover, the swelling causes pressure in different internal organs, such as the **diaphragm**, which in turn causes disturbance of the lung function, difficult inhalation and exhalation, as the patient begins to suffer from shortness of breath. Because of the pressure on the stomach and intestines, when eating, the patient feels heaviness, nausea, pain and that's why his appetite is greatly reduced. Various causes may lead to ascites. Generally, the flow of fluid in the abdomen exceeds its discharge, which is not related to the water intake, but is due to health problems in different organs:

### • Liver cirrhosis

- Hepatitis – types B and C
- Poisoning of the liver, for example, in alcoholism
- Kidney diseases
- Diseases of the circulatory system and of the cardiovascular system.
- It also may be caused by cancer
- – for example, **of the mammary gland, the colon,**
- **pancreas, the uterus, ovaries, intestines** and so on.

