

## Dropsy

*Oxford English Dictionary*: A morbid condition characterized by the accumulation of watery fluid in the serous cavities or the connective tissue of the body.

Dropsy (<http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=13311>): An old term for the swelling of soft tissues due to the accumulation of excess water.

In years gone by, a person might have been said to have dropsy. Today one would be more descriptive and specify the cause. Thus, the person might have [edema](#) due to [congestive heart failure](#).

Edema is often more prominent in the lower legs and feet toward the end of the day as a result of pooling of fluid from the upright position usually maintained during the day. Upon awakening from sleeping, people can have swelling around the eyes referred to as periorbital edema.

The Middle English *dropesie* came through the Old French *hydropsie* from the Greek *hydrops* which in turn came from the Greek *hydor* meaning water.

1746 December 22 (Monday). At Mr. Nurses at Eve and as I return'd home I visited Jonathan Maynard who is ill of a Dropsie.

1754 August 15 (Thursday). Mr. Jonathan Bond comes from Boston with a Letter from Mr. Joshua Winter informing me that my Neece Mrs. Lydia Davis at Halifax dyed of a Dropsie July 3 last.

1756 December 29 (Wednesday). I visit Mr. Hezekiah How's Wife who is dropsical and rheumatic as well as paralytic; but is better.

1757 October 19 (Wednesday). P.M. I visit *Hutchins* (a transient young Man) who is dropsical: and bleeds at the Nose — and in a hazzardous Condition.

1758 February 23 (Thursday). I visited old Mrs. *Gaschet* who is in a low Condition, being very Aged and dropsical. Dined at her sons.

1773 February 23 (Tuesday). I rode in my Sleigh to *Grafton*.... Thence I went to visit old Mr. *Prentice* (which was my principal Design in going), he being far gone in a Dropsy. Found him pleasant, and his wife also Sociable. She Speaks of her Husband under the name of Brother *Solomon*.

1774 March 10 (Thursday). Visit old Lt. *Bruce* whose Cancer prevails in his Nose and right Cheek and his wife who is very aged and dropsical. Discoursed and prayed with them.

1774 August 10 (Wednesday). We rode into the Town. My Daughter Lydia went also. Visit Master Minot. Old Mr. Hartshorn there. Dined at the Doctors. Mrs. Martyn was there also.

P.M. Visit Mr. *Emmerson*. His Mother *Bliss* in a low State. Visit Thomas *Whitney* Esquire who is under a Dropsie. Prayed with him. Returned to my Sons and lodged there.

1774 August 11 (Thursday). In returning called at Col. *Weeks*. Dined at Cousen *Uriah* *Brighams*. Visit Mr. *Smith* in Affliction. His negro woman, *Happy*, under a Dropsie. Called at Col. *Williams*'.

1775 March 7 (Tuesday). Visit old Mrs. *Bruce*, who is exceedingly Swelled with Dropsie. Prayed with her.

1775 March 23 (Thursday). Visited old Mrs. *Bruce*, under the Dropsie, and her Grandson *Asa* Sick of a Fever — prayed with them. [Mary, widow of *Abijah*.]

1775 July 17 (Monday). I went to the aged Widow *Sarah Forbush*; who is grown dropsical, besides the trouble of her Cancer. Conversed, examined and prayed with her.

1779 May 24 (Monday). Miss *Eliza Beals* came in to see me and consult me upon her Spiritual State — mentions several Scriptures She would have me preach upon, but which I have already. As to her bodily State, she is grown exceeding dropsical.

*Massachusetts Spy*, Mar. 5, 1789, p. [3]: At Westborough, Mrs. *Elizabeth Beals*, aged 46 — she laboured under a dropsy, — had been tapped for that disorder seven times, within 15 months, and 421 weight of water drawn from her.