



Ovarian Cancer Fact Sheet

for Patients and Caregivers



Cancers that start in the ovaries are called ovarian cancer. In the US, the number of ovarian cancer cases has slowly dropped. But it is still the fifth-leading cause of cancer death in women. The most common types of ovarian cancer are called epithelial tumors. This cancer happens most often in women over age 60. It is more common in white women than Black women.

Risk Factors and Prevention

Several risk factors are known to increase a woman's chance for ovarian cancer. These include:

- Age
- Excess body weight
- Never having children
- Using hormone therapy after menopause
- Personal history of endometriosis or pelvic inflammatory disease
- Having a personal or family history of breast, ovarian, or colorectal cancer
- Women with an inherited gene mutation or family cancer syndrome, such as *BRCA1* or *BRCA2* or Lynch syndrome, also have an increased risk for ovarian cancer

There are no known ways to prevent most ovarian cancers. If you have a family history or inherited gene changes, your health care provider may have you see a genetic counselor. They can help you better understand your risks and make informed decisions about your care.

Screening and Detection

Screening is a process used to test for cancer in people who have no symptoms. For now, there are no good screening tests for ovarian cancer. Only about 20% of ovarian cancers are found at an early stage.

Knowing your family history and other risk factors, getting regular pelvic exams, and telling your doctor about any symptoms you have right away are the best ways to find ovarian cancer early. Talk to your health care provider about having routine pelvic exams and about your risk for ovarian cancer.

Signs and Symptoms

Some signs and symptoms might include:

- Abdominal (belly) swelling or bloating, sometimes with weight loss
- Trouble eating or feeling full quickly
- Belly or back pain
- Fatigue
- Feeling like you need to empty your bladder all the time or having to go often
- Pain during sex
- Changes in periods, such as heavier or irregular bleeding

Treatment

Treatment for ovarian cancer depends on the type and stage (how big the cancer is and if it has spread) and the results of any testing done on the tumor. A woman's age, other health problems, and personal choices are also considered. If you have ovarian cancer, talk to your doctor about the best treatment for you.

Living With Ovarian Cancer

Ovarian cancer affects a woman's quality of life. Physical, social, mental health, spiritual, and money issues can come up at any time.

Women with ovarian cancer may be helped by palliative care at any time. Palliative care focuses on helping manage symptoms, addressing issues, and improving quality of life.

Good communication between a woman with ovarian cancer and her health care team is important. This should include:

- Asking and answering questions
- Working together to set care goals
- Making shared decisions
- Managing side effects and other issues
- Scheduling follow-up tests and care



Visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/cancer/ovarian-cancer or call us at **1-800-227-2345** to learn more. We're here when you need us.



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