Uterine Sarcoma Causes, Risk Factors, and Prevention

Risk Factors

A risk factor is anything that affects your chance of getting a disease such as cancer. Learn more about the risk factors for uterine sarcoma.

- Risk Factors for Uterine Sarcoma
- What Causes Uterine Sarcoma?

Prevention

Most cases of uterine sarcoma cannot be prevented. Although pelvic radiation increases the risk of developing a uterine sarcoma, the benefit of pelvic radiation in treating other cancers far outweighs the risk of developing a rare cancer such as uterine sarcoma many years later.

- Can Uterine Sarcoma Be Prevented?

Risk Factors for Uterine Sarcoma

A risk factor is anything that affects your chance of getting a disease such as cancer. Different cancers have different risk factors. For example, exposing skin to strong sunlight is a risk factor for skin cancer. Smoking is a risk factor for many cancers.
There are different kinds of risk factors. Some, such as your age or race, can't be changed. Others may be related to personal choices such as smoking, drinking, or diet. Some factors influence risk more than others. But risk factors don't tell us everything. Having a risk factor, or even several, does not mean that a person will get the disease. Also, not having any risk factors doesn't mean that you won't get the disease.

These factors are known to change a woman's risk of developing a uterine sarcoma.

**Pelvic radiation therapy**

High-energy (ionizing) radiation\(^1\) used to treat some cancers can damage cells' DNA, sometimes increasing the risk of developing a second type of cancer\(^2\). If you've had pelvic radiation, your risk for developing uterine sarcoma is increased. These cancers usually are diagnosed 5 to 25 years after you've been exposed to the radiation.

**Race**

Uterine sarcomas are about twice as common in African-American women as they are in white or Asian women. The reason for this is unknown.

**RB gene changes**

Women who have had a type of eye cancer called retinoblastoma\(^3\) that was caused by being born with an abnormal copy of the \(RB\) gene have an increased risk of uterine leiomyosarcomas.

Remember, that these factors increase the risk for developing some uterine sarcomas, but they may not always cause the disease.

**Hyperlinks**


**References**
What Causes Uterine Sarcoma?

Doctors don't know exactly what causes most uterine sarcomas, but certain risk factors have been identified. Research is helping to learn more about this rare disease.

For instance, scientists have learned about changes in the DNA of certain genes when normal uterine cells develop into sarcomas. You can learn more about research being done in What's New in Uterine Sarcoma Research and Treatment?

Hyperlinks


References

See all references for Uterine Sarcoma (www.cancer.org/cancer/uterine-sarcoma/references.html)

Can Uterine Sarcoma Be Prevented?

Most cases of uterine sarcoma cannot be prevented. Although pelvic radiation increases the risk of developing a uterine sarcoma, the benefit of pelvic radiation in treating other cancers far outweighs the risk of developing a rare cancer such as uterine
sarcoma many years later.

References

See all references for Uterine Sarcoma (www.cancer.org/cancer/uterine-sarcoma/references.html)

Last Medical Review: October 12, 2017 Last Revised: November 13, 2017

Written by

The American Cancer Society medical and editorial content team (www.cancer.org/cancer/acs-medical-content-and-news-staff.html)

Our team is made up of doctors and oncology certified nurses with deep knowledge of cancer care as well as journalists, editors, and translators with extensive experience in medical writing.

American Cancer Society medical information is copyrighted material. For reprint requests, please see our Content Usage Policy (www.cancer.org/about-us/policies/content-usage.html).

4