



Ovarian Cancer Fact Sheet

for Patients and Caregivers



In the US, the number of ovarian cancer cases has dropped over time. The most common types of ovarian cancer are called high-grade serous tumors that are thought to develop in cells at the end of the fallopian tube. Ovarian cancer happens most often in women over age 60.

Risk Factors and Prevention

Several risk factors are known to increase your chance of developing ovarian cancer. These include:

- Age
- Excess body weight
- Never having children or having a first child after age 35
- 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 is no sure way to prevent most ovarian cancers, and some risk factors can't be changed. But there are some things that may help lower risk for ovarian cancer.

Getting to and staying at a healthy weight, using oral contraceptives (birth control pills) for 5 or more years, and not taking hormone therapy after menopause may help lower ovarian cancer risk. Women who are having pelvic surgery for other medical reasons may choose to have their fallopian tubes removed, as this may also decrease ovarian cancer risk.

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 recommended screening tests for ovarian cancer.

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

Ovarian cancer often has no signs or symptoms until it has gotten bigger or spread to other parts of the body. The most common signs and symptoms are:

- 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 pee 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. Your 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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