

OVARIAN CANCER

Ovarian cancer occurs when cancerous cells develop in, near, or on the outer layer of one or both ovaries.

This rare, but aggressive disease ranks fifth in cancer deaths among women, accounting for more deaths than any other cancer of the female reproductive system.



Signs and Symptoms

Pay attention to your body and know what is normal for you.

Ovarian cancer may cause one or more of these signs:

- Vaginal bleeding (particularly if you are past menopause) or discharge from your vagina that is not normal
- Pain or pressure in the pelvic or abdomen area
- Feeling full or quickly or difficulty eating
- A change in your bathroom habits such as more frequent or urge to urinate
- Back pain
- Bloating



Risk Factors

All women are at risk for ovarian cancer, but older women are more likely to get the disease.

Ovarian cancer often develops after menopause.

- Being overweight or obese
- Having children later or never having a full-term pregnancy
- Taking hormone therapy after menopause
- Having had or having a family history of ovarian cancer, breast cancer, or colorectal cancer
- Using fertility treatment
- Smoking
- Having endometriosis



Prevention

- Staying at a healthy weight or not taking hormone replacement therapy after menopause
- Oral contraceptives (birth control pills) for more than five years
- Gynecologic surgery: Having tubal ligation (tubes tied), ovaries removed, or hysterectomy (uterus is removed)
- If your family has a history of ovarian cancer, consider genetic counseling and testing



Statistics

According to a University of Hawai'i Cancer Center study, Native Hawaiian women had a **36 percent higher risk** for ovarian cancer than White women.

Among Asian ethnicities, Asian Indians/Pakistanis had the **highest rate of ovarian cancer** (Lee et al., 2019).

Chinese, Filipino, and Japanese women had **significantly higher incidence rates** of clear cell ovarian cancer. (Lee et al., 2019)

Ovarian Cancer Screening:

There is not a simple or reliable way to screen for ovarian cancer.

Since there is not a reliable test, it is important to pay attention to your body and know what is normal for you.

If you notice changes in your body that are not normal, reach out to your doctor.

Ask your doctor if you should have a diagnostic test, like a rectovaginal pelvic exam, a transvaginal ultrasound, or a CA-125 blood test if you have any unexplained signs or symptoms of ovarian cancer.

These tests sometimes help find or rule out ovarian cancer.

(From the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention)

Resources

- **Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance:** ocrahope.org
- **National Ovarian Cancer Coalition:** ovarian.org
- **National Cancer Institute:** cancer.gov
- **American Cancer Society:** cancer.org/cancer-information-in-other-languages.html
- **'Imi Hale Native Hawaiian Cancer Network:** imihale.org/education_materials.htm#CancerScreening
- **Asian American Health Initiative:** aahinfo.org/english/programs/progCancerInit.php#cprogram
- **California State University, Fullerton:** wincart.fullerton.edu/cancer_edu/index.htm