

Ovarian Cancer

Risk. Awareness. Diagnosis.



What is ovarian cancer?

Ovarian cancer affects the ovaries and can also affect the fallopian tubes and peritoneum (the lining of your tummy).

What causes ovarian cancer?

The exact cause of ovarian cancer is often not known, but several factors can increase risk. These include family history, previous breast or bowel cancer, previous radiotherapy, and a history of diabetes or endometriosis. Risk is also higher if you started your periods early, went through menopause late, have not had a baby, have never used hormonal contraception or are on HRT. Smoking and being overweight also increase cancer risk.

Who can get ovarian cancer?

Anyone with ovaries can get ovarian cancer, and most cases are in women over 50. It's possible to get ovarian cancer even if you've had your ovaries removed, because ovarian cancer can also affect the fallopian tubes or peritoneum.

How common is ovarian cancer?

Ovarian cancer is the sixth most common cancer in UK females, with around 7,600 new cases every year. That's around 1 in 56 women.

How preventable is ovarian cancer?

Scientists believe that around 11% of ovarian cancer cases are preventable. You can lower your risk of ovarian cancer by not smoking, maintaining a healthy weight and talking to your GP if you have a family history.

Is there a screening programme for ovarian cancer?

There isn't a national screening programme for ovarian cancer in the UK. This is because there isn't a test that reliably picks up ovarian cancer at an early stage.

What if someone has a family history of ovarian cancer?

People who have a family history of ovarian cancer, or who have inherited a faulty gene that can increase risk, like the BRCA 1/2 gene, should speak to their GP. It's possible that they may be referred to a genetic counsellor who can assess their risk, and talk through risk-reducing surgery or regular tests.

55%

Of women aged 25–54 worry about getting cancer in the future.

48%

Of women aged 45+ say they have never received cancer risk information during healthcare appointments.

10%

Of women surveyed do not believe any risk factors are related to cancer.

How is ovarian cancer diagnosed?

If you have some of the signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer listed below, your GP will probably recommend two tests:

01

A blood test

This test is looking for a protein that can indicate tumours in the body.

02

An ultrasound scan

This might be a transvaginal scan, which is done by inserting a smooth tube into your vagina, or an abdominal scan over your tummy.

If the tests suggest you might have ovarian cancer, you might have other tests including a CT scan and/or a biopsy.

If the tests do not indicate ovarian cancer, your GP should check to see whether anything else may be causing your symptoms.



What are the signs or symptoms to be aware of?

The main symptoms of ovarian cancer can include:

- Pain in your tummy, pelvis or back
- Bloating that doesn't go away
- Loss of appetite or feeling full quickly after eating
- A more frequent or urgent need for a wee

Additional symptoms include:

- Feeling tired for no reason
- Changes to the way you poo
- Losing weight without trying or feeling sick
- Indigestion
- Bleeding between periods or after the menopause

These symptoms can be caused by conditions other than ovarian cancer. However, if these symptoms are new for you or don't go away, you should contact your GP.



How treatable is ovarian cancer?

As with many cancers, if it is caught early, ovarian cancer is highly treatable. For those who are diagnosed at the earliest stage, around 95 out of 100 women will survive their cancer for 5 years or more after.

What should you do if you don't have symptoms but want more information?

If you want to know more about what ovarian cancer is and the symptoms to look out for and report, you can follow this [link](#).

Whole Human Cancer Care, from Risk to Recovery.