Perci Health

Gynaecological cancer

Awareness, prevention and support



What is gynaecological cancer?

These are female cancers that affect the reproductive system: the womb, ovaries, cervix, vulva and vagina.

What causes gynaecological cancers?

There's no single cause of most gynaecological cancers - they happen when abnormal cells in or near the area grow out of control. However, the main cause of cervical cancer is a virus called human papillomavirus (HPV).

How common is gynaecological cancer?

22,050 people are diagnosed with gynaecological cancer each year in the UK - that's 60 every day.

Who can get gynaecological cancer?

Anyone with gynaecological organs can get gynaecological cancer, including women and people assigned female at birth. Most cases occur in those over 50, though some types can affect younger people.

Most cervical cancer cases are diagnosed in those aged 30-45, and inherited gene changes like BRCA1 and BRCA2 can increase the risk of ovarian or womb cancer at an earlier age.

How preventable is gynaecological cancer?

Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable cancers. HPV vaccination and screening prevent up to 99% of cases. Other gynaecological cancers are mainly prevented by reducing risk factors, such as maintaining a healthy body weight and not smoking.

Is there a screening programme for gynaecological cancer?

The NHS offers only cervical screening, via HPV testing. Other screening tests aren't currently available, as there's no proven early test, the cancer is rare, or benefits don't outweigh costs.

What if someone has a family history of gynaecological cancer?

People with a family history of gynaecological cancer, or an inherited faulty gene like BRCA1/2, should speak to their GP, who may refer them to a genetic counsellor.

55%

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

48%

Of women aged 45+ haven't received cancer risk information during healthcare appointments

10%

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

What signs or symptoms should people be aware of?



You should visit your GP if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- Unusual vaginal bleeding or discharge, including any bleeding after the menopause
- Persistent bloating, feeling full more quickly, or nausea
- A persistent itch, lump or changes to the vulval skin or vagina
- Unexplained lower back, abdominal or pelvic pain

Do these symptoms mean someone definitely has gynaecological cancer?

No. The symptoms above can be caused by many things other than cancer but if they are new for you it’s important to get them checked by a GP.

How is gynaecological cancer diagnosed?



If you have some of the signs and symptoms of gynaecological cancer listed below, your GP will probably refer you to a gynaecologist.

The type of tests you might have will depend on the cancer type, but may include the following:

- Blood tests
- An ultrasound scan
- Further scans - CT, MRI and/or PET-CT
- A biopsy (a small sample of cells for testing)

Whole Human Cancer Care, from Risk to Recovery.

Sources • cancerresearchuk.org • nhs.uk •