

Time to think about...

Ovarian Cancer



Registered charity no. 1109743



What is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month?

Awareness of ovarian cancer and its symptoms is low in the UK. Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month provides a great opportunity to raise awareness of ovarian cancer and raise money for research.



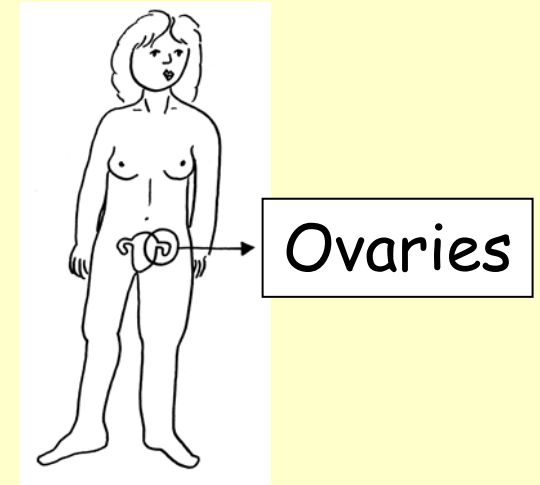
Ovarian Cancer Action is keen to raise awareness of the disease, its symptoms and its work with women, healthcare professionals and the media.



What are the Ovaries?

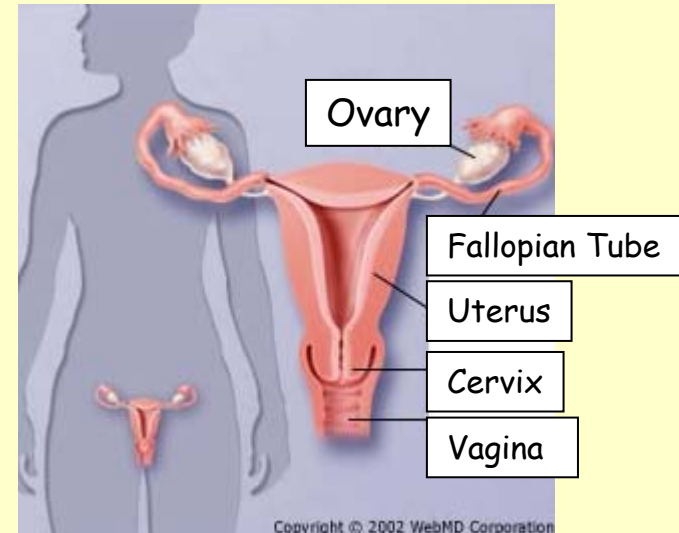
The ovaries are two small, oval-shaped organs that are part of the female reproductive system.

They are in the lower part of the tummy (abdomen), which is known as the pelvis.



What is Ovarian Cancer?

It can develop when cells in the ovaries start to grow in an uncontrolled way. Ovarian cancer is a lump created by this abnormal and uncontrolled growth of cells. Cancer grows and can sometimes spread to other parts of your body through the blood.



Ovarian Cancer is the 5th most common cancer in women.

In the UK there are around 7000 cases a year.



What is Ovarian Cancer?

Ovarian cancer used to be called 'the silent killer', with most women not being diagnosed until the cancer had spread.



Diagnosis is now possible when it is in the early stages, making survival rates much higher.



Diagnosis can be difficult because symptoms are often similar to those caused by more common, less serious conditions.



What are the Risks?

There are a number of risk factors that women should be aware of:

Age - The majority of cases occur in women after the menopause. However some rare types of ovarian cancer do appear in women from the age of 20.

Family History - Most ovarian cancers are not inherited. But about 1 in 10 cases are caused by a faulty gene. If you have close relatives who have had ovarian cancer you may be more at risk of also developing the cancer.

Weight - Being overweight may also increase the risk at a younger age.

Ethnicity - Women from a Icelandic, Jewish, Pakistani, or Polish background are at a higher risk of developing Ovarian cancer.



Signs & Symptoms.

If you have any of the following 3 symptoms on most days, you should go and see your doctor.



- If your tummy is swollen or bigger than normal and doesn't go away.



Your clothes may not fit properly.



- If you have pain in your lower tummy that is there all the time and gets worse.



- If you find it hard to eat, get full quickly or can't eat very much.



Diagnosis is difficult because symptoms are often similar to more common, less serious, conditions.



Signs & Symptoms.

Other symptoms that may show signs of cancer and should be reported to your doctor include:

- Needing to go for a wee more often than usual. Anything that is different when having a wee or painful.



- Tiredness (fatigue).



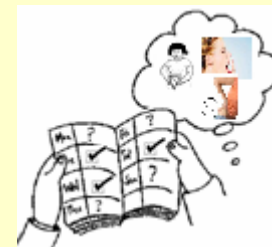
- Going for a poo more often or feeling constipated. A change in what is normal for you.



- Pain in your lower back.



These signs and symptoms can occur on most days of the month on their own or with other symptoms.



Reducing the risks.

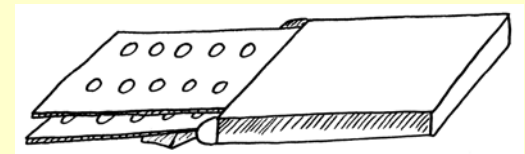
To help to reduce your risk for many cancers it is important to develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle by:

- ✓ Eating plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables,
- ✓ Taking regular exercise,
- ✓ Not drinking too much alcohol,
- ✓ Stop smoking.



Some research has shown that the risk of ovarian cancer may be reduced in women who have;

- ✓ Used the contraceptive pill,
- ✓ Had children,
- ✓ Breast fed their children,
- ✓ Had a hysterectomy.



Always ASK your doctor!!!



Tests for Ovarian Cancer.



Seeing your GP.

Usually, you begin by seeing your GP who will ask you about your health and gently feel your tummy. Your GP may do an internal examination to see if your womb and ovaries feel normal.

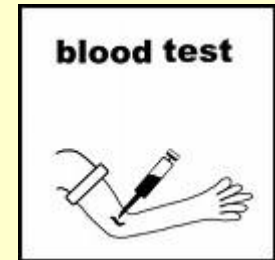


These tests may be used to help diagnose ovarian cancer:

Blood Test.

Ultrasound. - This can help to show whether the ovaries;

- Are the right size.
- look normal in texture.
- Have any cysts.



CT Scan.

This is a type of X-ray that takes pictures from different angles.

Your doctor uses the scan to get a detailed picture of the ovaries and surrounding areas.



Top Tips for communicating with your GP!!



- Make a list of your concerns.
(your mind can go blank when you feel under pressure).
- Try and give your doctor as much detail on your symptoms as possible, you could use the **symptom diary** for this at www.ovarian.org.uk
- Tell your doctor if anyone else in your family has had breast or ovarian cancer.
- If you are worried about ovarian cancer tell your doctor. They would rather you spoke up than suffered in silence.
- Don't be embarrassed to go back again or ask to see another doctor if you don't feel any better.
- If your doctor reassures you there is nothing to worry about ask them to explain why they are not concerned.



Where to go for help & advice?

It is recommended that if you have concerns, want to talk to someone or want more information that you;

- Visit your GP
- Visit www.ovarian.org.uk for answers to some of the most common questions.



Other useful websites include



www.cancerbackup.org.uk
Macmillan Nurses Helpline
0808 800 1234



www.cancerhelp.org.uk
0808 800 40 40

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