



What reduces your risk?

Keeping a healthy weight

Being very overweight (obese) may increase the risk of ovarian cancer. So keeping a healthy weight may help to lower the chances of developing the disease.

Being a non-smoker

Women who smoke are at higher risk of developing ovarian cancer. If you smoke, quitting can help cut your risk of ovarian cancer and other diseases.

Having children

The more children a woman has, the lower her risk of ovarian cancer.

The Pill

Oral contraceptives significantly reduce the chance of developing ovarian cancer, both while you are taking them and long after you stop. Taking the Pill slightly increases the risk of breast cancer, but only while you're still taking it.

Breastfeeding

Women who breastfeed their children have a lower risk of ovarian cancer.

What increases your risk?

Age

As a woman gets older, her risk of developing ovarian cancer increases. Most cases are in women over 50.

HRT

Using hormone replacement therapy (HRT), particularly oestrogen-only HRT, can increase a woman's risk of ovarian cancer. The longer women take HRT, the more the risk increases.

Family history

Women with a family history of ovarian or breast cancer may have an increased risk of ovarian cancer.

More about family history

About one woman in 10 who develops ovarian cancer is known to have been born with a faulty gene that runs in her family. But having relatives with ovarian cancer does not always mean you have a faulty gene.

If two or more of your very close relatives – such as your mother, sister or daughter – has had ovarian cancer or breast cancer, you may be at increased risk of ovarian cancer. If these relatives were under 50 when they were diagnosed with cancer, then it is more likely that you have a faulty gene.

If you think you may have a family history of ovarian cancer, ask your doctor for more information and advice.

Further information

For more about screening and the signs and symptoms of cancer visit www.spotcancerearly.com

For more about cancer visit our patient information website www.cancerhelp.org.uk

If you want to talk in confidence about cancer, call our information nurses on freephone **0808 800 4040**.

Our health messages are based on scientific evidence. Find out more at www.cancerresearchuk.org/health

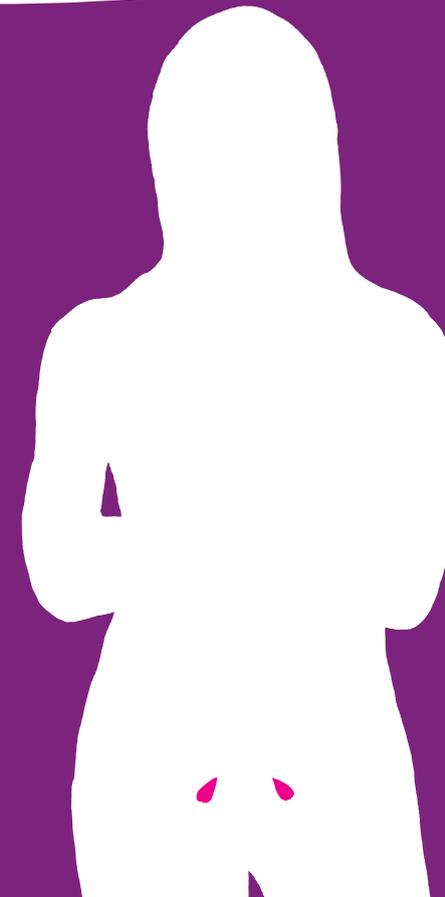
All our leaflets are thoroughly researched and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. They are reviewed externally by independent experts and updated regularly. You can order our full range of leaflets free online at www.cancerresearchuk.org/leaflets

About Cancer Research UK

Cancer Research UK is the world's leading charity dedicated to research into the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer. If you would like to support our work, please call **020 7121 6699** or visit our website www.cancerresearchuk.org

Together we will beat cancer

Detecting ovarian cancer and how to reduce your risk





Ovarian cancer facts

This leaflet is about ovarian cancer, its symptoms and the things that affect your risk of developing the disease.

Ovarian cancer is the fifth most common cancer in women in the UK, and mainly affects older women.

When ovarian cancer is found early, it is easier to treat and there is a better chance of survival. If you have any of the symptoms mentioned in this leaflet, they happen again and again, and they are new for you, it is best to see your doctor.

How common is it?

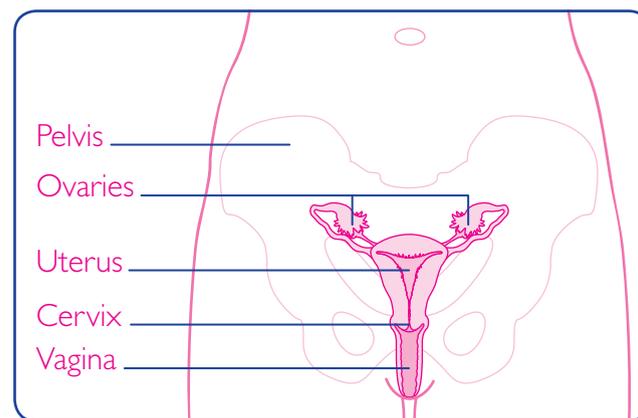
Around one woman in every 50 will develop ovarian cancer over her lifetime. It mainly affects older women – more than four out of five cases are in women over 50.

The ovaries

The ovaries are part of the female reproductive system. There is one located on each side of a woman's lower tummy. Each is about the size and shape of an almond.

Thousands of eggs are stored inside the ovaries. Each month an egg is released for a possible pregnancy.

The ovaries also produce hormones which control monthly menstrual cycles.



What is ovarian cancer?

The ovaries are made up of millions of cells. Some of these cells make hormones, some surround the eggs as they develop, and others make up the outside layer of the ovary.

Cancer develops when any one of these cells starts to multiply out of control, forming a tumour. Most ovarian cancers start in cells in the outside layer of the ovary.

Why is early detection important?

More and more women are surviving ovarian cancer. Finding cancer at an early stage gives a better chance of being treated successfully. More than nine in 10 women survive ovarian cancer for at least five years if it is detected at an early stage.

Too many women are diagnosed at the later stages. It is important for women to know the symptoms so that they can get them checked out as early as possible. Early diagnosis can save lives.

What are the symptoms of ovarian cancer?

Experts agree that the following symptoms are common in women with ovarian cancer:

- persistent pelvic and tummy pain
- increased tummy size or bloating that doesn't go away
- difficulty eating or feeling full quickly.

Lots of women experience symptoms similar to these and usually they are nothing serious. But you should see your doctor if you regularly have any of these symptoms, which are not normal for you, and they happen on most days.

Other symptoms to look out for are passing urine more often than usual, changes in bowel habit, bleeding after the menopause, extreme tiredness or back pain. The most important thing is to be aware of what is normal for you so you can spot any new changes, and get them checked out early.

If you have already been to your doctor and the symptoms have got worse or have not gone away, it is important to go back again and get checked out.