



OVARIAN HEALTH

PROMOTING CANCER AWARENESS & EARLY DETECTION

Taking Control of Your Health

Cancer is the most curable in its early stages.

At the Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute, we know that routine screenings save lives every day. Advocate for your health and talk with a health care professional to make an informed decision on which screenings are right for you.

What is ovarian cancer?

- Ovarian cancer is the growth of cancer cells in the ovary tissue.
- The ovaries are part of the reproductive system. The ovaries produce female hormones estrogen and progesterone. Only females can develop ovarian cancer.
- Ovarian cancer is the fifth leading cause of cancer death in women.

- Having a history of ovarian, breast or colorectal cancer.
- Having a family history (especially mother, daughter or sister) of ovarian, breast or colorectal cancer.
- Each year, more than 21,900 women in the United States get ovarian cancer and more than 14,000 women die from the disease.
- Women ages 35-74 are the most likely age group to develop ovarian cancer.

Early ovarian cancer may have no specific symptoms.

Who can get ovarian cancer?

- Any woman can develop ovarian cancer, although there are certain factors that increase your risk, such as:
 - Starting menstruation before the age of 12.
 - Starting menopause after the age of 50.
 - Never having children or having your first child after the age of 30.

What are the symptoms of ovarian cancer?

- Early ovarian cancer may have no specific symptoms.
- Abdominal swelling or discomfort (gas, bloating, cramps) that does not go away.
- Back or leg pain that does not go away.
- Feeling tired all the time.
- Bleeding from the vagina after having sex, between monthly periods or after menopause.

How do I get checked for ovarian cancer?

All women should have an annual pelvic and rectal exam. If there are any abnormal lumps or masses in the pelvis, this may be detected during the exam.

See a health care provider every year and discuss your cancer risks and screening needs. Be aware of changes in your body.

If you are at an increased risk for ovarian cancer, you should discuss with your health care provider what tests are right for you. The experts at the Karmanos Cancer Institute recommend the following tests for high-risk women:

- Genetic Testing for the mutated BRCA 1 or BRCA 2 gene. Women with a mutated BRCA 1 gene have a 35%-70% increased chance of getting ovarian cancer.
- Transvaginal Ultrasound – An ultrasound is helpful in finding a mass in the ovary, though it does not detect if a mass is cancerous.
- Blood Test – The CA-125 is a blood test measuring a protein in the blood that may be higher in women with ovarian cancer.

Your health care provider will help you determine when to begin testing and how often.



How do I lower my risk for ovarian cancer?

Research is still being done to understand how to lower your risk for ovarian cancer. Here are some of the steps you can take:

- Talk to your health care provider about oral contraceptives, pregnancy and breast feeding.
- Talk to your health care provider about tubal ligation ("tying" your tubes) or having your ovaries removed if you are at greater than average risk.

A woman's risk of getting invasive ovarian cancer in her lifetime is about one in 70.

*This information is intended to serve as a guideline only. Screening needs vary for each individual depending on your overall cancer risk. Please consult with a health care professional to decide which screenings are right for you and to make an informed decision.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you would like to learn more about any of these topics, please visit karmanos.org. To make an appointment or to reach the Patient & Community Education department call Karmanos at 1-800-527-6266. Reliable information is also available from the following sources:

American Cancer Society
877-ACS-2345
Cancer.org



CANCER INSTITUTE

Wayne State University

National Cancer Institute
800-4-CANCER
Cancer.gov

