



Ovarian Cancer

The American Cancer Society estimates approximately 21,550 new cases of ovarian cancer will be diagnosed in the United States in 2009. Ovarian cancer accounts for about 3% of all cancers in women and mainly develops in those over age 50 but may also affect younger women ⁽¹⁾.

Ovarian cancer affects the ovaries, glands located in the lower abdomen of women. Ovaries produce eggs for reproduction and are the main source of female hormones like estrogen and progesterone ⁽¹⁾.

Ovarian cancer is difficult to detect early; many times women have very few symptoms until the disease is in an advanced stage. Listed below are some of the symptoms of ovarian cancer ⁽²⁾:

- Bloating sensation
- Pelvic or abdominal pain
- Vaginal bleeding
- Weight gain or loss
- Abnormal menstrual periods
- Worsening back pain
- Gas, nausea, vomiting or loss of appetite

Several key factors that may increase your risk include ⁽³⁾:

- Age (middle-aged or older)
- Family history of ovarian cancer
- History of breast, uterine or colorectal cancer
- Eastern European Jewish background
- Difficulty conceiving
- Having never given birth
- Diagnosis of endometriosis (a condition where tissue from the lining of the uterus grows in the body)

Tests most commonly used for screening include: a recto-vaginal pelvic exam, a trans-vaginal ultrasound, or a CA-125 blood test ⁽¹⁾.

Women who are concerned about symptoms they may be experiencing should see their gynecologist immediately. For more information on ovarian cancer, please visit the following web-links:

Ovarian Cancer Information:

- [All About Ovarian Cancer](#)
- [Ovarian Cancer Risk Questionnaire](#)
- [Ovarian Cancer Interactive Tutorial](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [What is Endometriosis?](#)

References:

1. [American Cancer Society](#)
2. [U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health](#)
3. [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

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