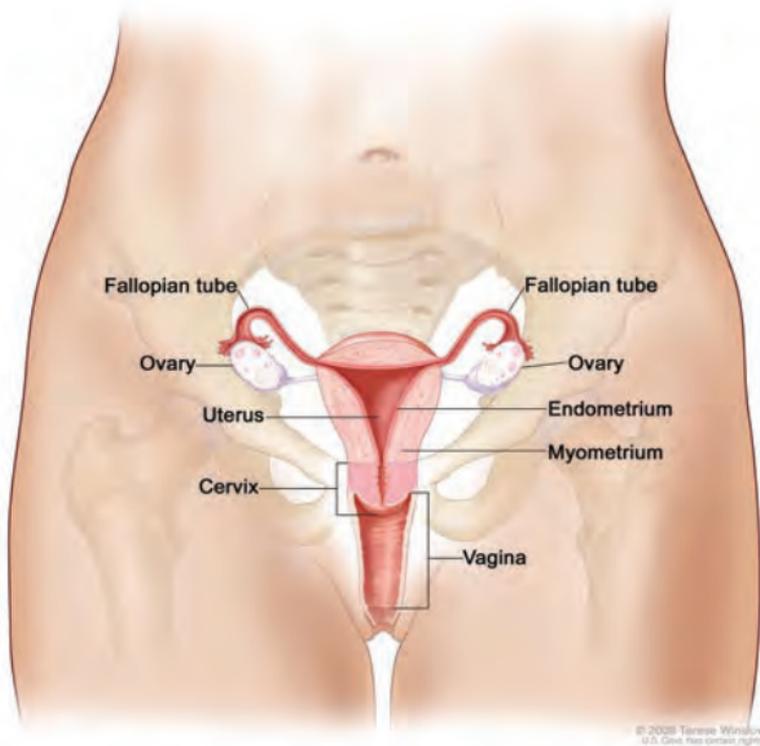


Gynecologic Cancer: Prevention and Early Detection



Woman's

Gynecologic (GYN) Cancers



Gynecologic (GYN) cancers are cancers of the female reproductive system that include the uterus, fallopian tubes, ovaries, cervix, vagina and vulva. The Pap smear (Pap test) has been very effective at detecting cervical cancer early; however, it does not detect other GYN cancers. It is very important to know risk factors, symptoms, and how to prevent and detect cancer early, when it can be most effectively treated. Schedule your annual GYN checkup that includes a complete "well woman" exam, because early detection could save your life. Be sure to discuss any potential signs or symptoms of GYN cancer with your doctor.

Cervical Cancer

Cervical cancer can occur at any age. Many older women do not realize that the risk of developing cervical cancer is still present as they age.

Risk Factors

- Exposure to the human papilloma virus (HPV)
- History of abnormal Pap smears
- Multiple sexual partners
- Smoking
- HIV
- Immunosuppressed status (i.e. lupus, kidney transplants, rheumatoid arthritis, Crohn's)

Symptoms

Women with early cervical cancers and pre-cancers usually have no symptoms, which is why routine Pap smears are so important. Symptoms often do not develop until the cancer becomes invasive.

When this happens, the most common symptoms are:

- Abnormal vaginal bleeding, such as bleeding after vaginal intercourse, bleeding after menopause, bleeding and/or spotting between periods, and having menstrual periods that are longer or heavier than usual. Bleeding after douching or after a pelvic exam may also occur.
- Unusual discharge from the vagina—the discharge may contain blood and may occur between your periods or after menopause.
- Pain during intercourse
- Pelvic, back or abdominal pain
- Change in bowel or bladder habits

These signs and symptoms can also be caused by conditions other than cervical cancer. Still, if you have any of these signs or other suspicious symptoms, you should see your healthcare professional immediately. Ignoring symptoms may allow the cancer to progress to a more advanced stage and lower your chance for effective treatment.

Early Detection and Prevention

- Have regular Pap smears and pelvic exams
- Decrease risk factors by:
 - Not smoking
 - Maintaining a healthy weight
 - Limiting sexual partners to decrease exposure to HPV
 - Using condoms
 - Getting the HPV vaccination (if age appropriate)

Gardasil and Gardasil 9 vaccines are FDA-approved to prevent HPV-caused cervical, vulvar, vaginal and anal cancers; precancerous vulvar, vaginal and anal lesions; head and neck cancers; and genital warts. These vaccines are also approved for males to prevent HPV-caused anal cancer, pre-cancerous anal lesions, penile cancer and precancerous penile lesions, and genital warts. Check with your doctor to see if you or your children can receive this vaccine.

Learn more about risk factors, staging and treatment from the American Cancer Society

Source: American Cancer Society

Ovarian/ Fallopian Tube/ Peritoneal Cancer

Ovarian cancer ranks fifth in cancer deaths among women, accounting for more deaths than any other cancer of the female reproductive system. This cancer mainly develops in peri or post-menopausal women, but can affect women of any age.

Risk Factors

- Family history of ovarian, breast or colon cancer
- Mutation in the BRCA gene
- Obesity
- Estrogen and hormone therapy
- Never having children
- Alcohol use
- Personal history of breast cancer or colon cancer

Symptoms

Early cancers of the ovaries often cause no symptoms, which is why ovarian cancer is often referred to as a “silent killer.” When ovarian cancer causes symptoms, they tend to be symptoms that are more commonly caused by other things.

The most common symptoms are:

- Abdominal swelling or bloating (due to a mass or a buildup of fluid)
- Pelvic pressure or abdominal pain
- Difficulty eating or feeling full quickly
- Urinary symptoms (having to go urgently or often)

What is most important is that these symptoms are a change from how a woman usually feels. Advanced-stage ovarian cancer may cause few and nonspecific symptoms that are often mistaken for common issues.

- Fatigue
- Upset stomach
- Abdominal, pelvic or back pain
- Bloating
- Changes in bowel movements
- Postmenopausal bleeding
- Abdominal swelling with weight loss



Early Detection and Prevention

There is currently no screening test for ovarian cancer. Have regular GYN exams and discuss your family history and risk factors with your doctor.

- Know your body and be persistent in getting medical care if you have symptoms of ovarian cancer.
- Decrease risk factors by:
 - Not smoking and limiting alcohol intake
 - Maintaining a healthy weight
 - Limiting estrogen and hormone use
 - Avoiding a fatty diet

If you have symptoms similar to those of ovarian cancer almost daily for more than a few weeks, and they can't be explained by other more common conditions, report them to your healthcare professional—preferably a gynecologist—immediately.

Learn more about risk factors, staging and treatment from the American Cancer Society

Uterine Cancer

There are two main types of cancer of the uterus: **Sarcomas**, which start in the muscle layer, and **endometrial** cancer, which starts in the cells of the inner lining of the uterus (the endometrium). Endometrial cancer is the most common.

Risk factors

- Things that affect hormone levels, like taking unopposed estrogen after menopause, or tamoxifen; and polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS)
- Obesity
- Older age
- Unhealthy/fatty diet and minimal/no exercise
- Diabetes, hypertension
- Family history (having close relatives with endometrial or colorectal cancer)
- Having been diagnosed with breast, ovarian or colon cancer in the past
- Having been diagnosed with endometrial hyperplasia in the past
- Treatment with radiation therapy to the pelvis to treat another cancer
- Infertility, low or no pregnancies

Symptoms

- Abnormal bleeding or spotting: If you have gone through menopause, any vaginal bleeding or spotting is abnormal, and it should be reported to your healthcare professional right away.
- Vaginal discharge: A discharge that does not contain blood is most often a sign of infection or another benign condition, but it also can be a sign of cancer. Any abnormal discharge should be checked out by your healthcare professional.
- Pelvic pain, pelvic mass or weight loss: Pain in the pelvis, feeling a mass (tumor) and losing weight without trying can also be symptoms. These symptoms are more common in later stages of the cancer.



Early Detection and Prevention

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Become physically active
- Discuss pros and cons of hormone therapy with your doctor
- Get treated for any endometrial problems
- Discuss family history and risk factors with your doctor
- Have regular GYN exams

Learn more about risk factors, staging and treatment from the American Cancer Society

Source: American Cancer Society

Vaginal Cancer

Vaginal cancer is rare and is more common in women 60 years or older.

Risk Factors

- Human papillomavirus (HPV) infection
- If your mother took diethylstilbestrol (DES) when she was pregnant, you are at increased risk
- History of abnormal cells in the vagina, cervix or uterus
- Personal history of cervical cancer or vulvar cancer
- Smoking
- HIV/Immunosuppressed

Symptoms

Vaginal cancer often doesn't have early symptoms.



See your doctor if you notice:

- Bleeding that is not related to menstruation (periods)
- Bleeding after intercourse or pain during intercourse
- A vaginal lump

Advanced cancer may cause:

- Pelvic pain
- Constipation
- Painful urination

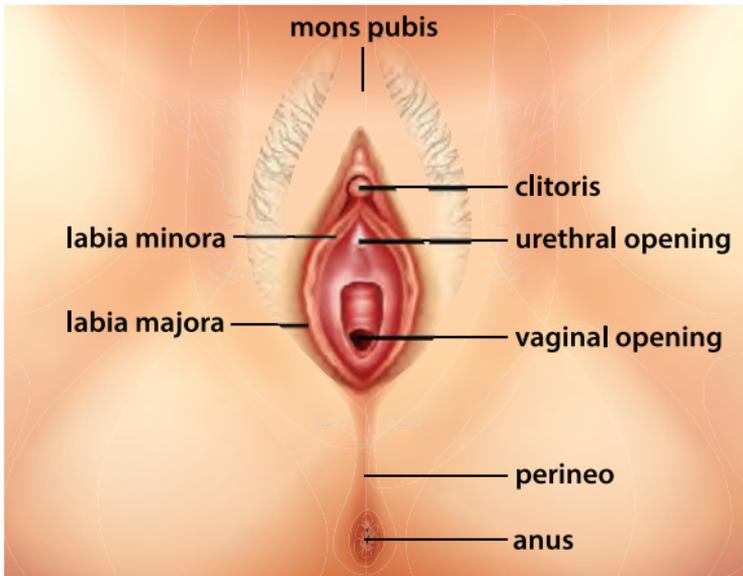
Early Detection and Prevention

- A Pap smear can find abnormal cells that may be cancer. Have regular GYN exams
- Do not smoke and limit alcohol intake
- Avoid irritation to the vagina
- Get the HPV vaccine (if age appropriate)

Learn more about risk factors, staging and treatment from the American Cancer Society

Source: American Cancer Society

Vulvar Cancer



Vulvar cancer is a rare disease in which cancer cells form in the external genitalia.

Risk Factors

Factors that may increase a woman's risk include:

- Vulvar intraepithelial neoplasia (VIN)
- Human papilloma virus (HPV) infection
- History of genital warts
- History of vulvar dystrophy
- Many sexual partners or sex with someone who has had many partners
- Having first sexual intercourse at a young age
- History of abnormal Pap smears
- Smoking

Symptoms

Vulvar cancer often does not cause early signs or symptoms. Signs and symptoms may be caused by vulvar cancer or by other conditions. Check with your doctor if you have any of the following vulvar symptoms:

- A lump or growth on the vulva
- Skin changes, such as color changes or growths that look like a wart or ulcer
- Itching that does not go away
- Bleeding not related to menstruation (periods)
- Tenderness or irritation

Early Detection and Prevention

Perform a monthly self exam of the vulva in between your periods. When performed monthly, any changes can be recognized and treated early. You may want to do it at the same time you do your monthly self breast exam to help you remember.

Use the following steps:

- Have a private place with good lighting
- Use a handheld mirror
- Stand, squat or sit over the mirror
- Start with the area where your pubic hair grows, moving to the clitoris, the labia majora (outer lips), the labia minora (inner lips) and finally the area between your vagina and anus
- Look for lumps, growths that look like warts or ulcers, moles, changes in skin color or bleeding
- Feel for lumps and any areas of tenderness
- Report anything you are concerned about to your doctor
- Decrease risk factors by:
 - Not smoking
 - Limiting the number of sex partners
 - Having regular GYN exams (even if you have had a hysterectomy)
 - Getting the HPV vaccine (if age appropriate)

Learn more about risk factors, staging and treatment from the American Cancer Society

Source: American Cancer Society



WHAT

**PELVIC
EXAM
WITH
PAP
SMEAR**

**PELVIC
EXAM**

HPV TEST

**CHLAMYDIA
TEST**

**SEXUALLY
TRANSMITTED
DISEASE (STD)
SCREENING**

Preventive Health Screenings for Your Reproductive/ Sexual Health

WHEN

WHY

Every 2 years from ages 21–30; every 3 years for women age 30 and older who have had three consecutive normal Pap smears. Screening may be stopped at age 65 or 70 for women who have three or more normal Pap smears in a row and no abnormal test results in 10 years. Women who have had their cervix and uterus removed may also stop having cervical cancer screenings, unless the surgery was done as treatment for cervical cancer or pre-cancer.

To screen for abnormalities that could indicate pre- or early cervical cancer.

Annual well woman's exam; Pelvic exams need to be continued even after having a hysterectomy, usually every 3–5 years.

To screen for abnormalities that could indicate cervical, ovarian, fallopian tube, vaginal and vulvar cancer.

Every 2–3 years along with Pap smear starting at age 30 (and in younger women with inconclusive Pap tests).

Helps identify women at risk for developing cervical cancer.

Yearly until age 25 if sexually active; for age 26 and older, get the test if you have new or multiple sexual partners.

Prevents spread of chlamydia.

All sexually active women and their partners should be tested for HIV and other STDs before starting sexual activity.

Prevents spread of HIV and other STDs, many of which can only be detected through testing.

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Woman's exceptional care, centered on you

Founded in 1968, Woman's is a nonprofit organization, governed by a board of community volunteers, providing medical care and services in order to improve the health of women and infants, including community education, research and outreach.