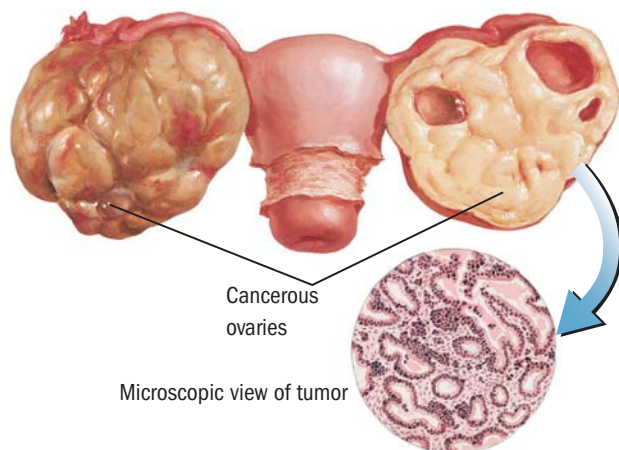
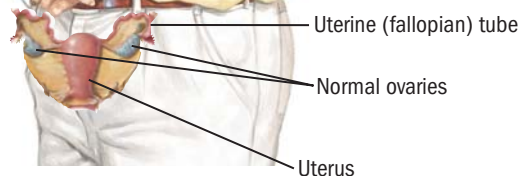


# MANAGING YOUR OVARIAN CANCER



Ovarian cancer is a gynecologic cancer in women. About half of women with it are older and have gone through menopause. It has no obvious symptoms. The most common are vague or mild and include discomfort or a heavy feeling in the lower abdomen, loss of appetite, and weight loss or gain.



An ovarian tumor detected in a physical exam can be tested to determine if it is cancerous. Your doctor can use the surgery to stage the tumor, which will help decide treatment.



Your doctor may also use ultrasound and blood tests for diagnosis.



## What Is Ovarian Cancer?

Ovarian cancer is a malignant tumor in the ovary, the woman's reproductive organ that releases eggs and female hormones, such as estrogen. It's the second most common women's cancer (after cancer of the uterus). About half of women with this cancer are older (average age of 59) and have gone through menopause (change of life), so their ovaries no longer work.

## What Causes Ovarian Cancer?

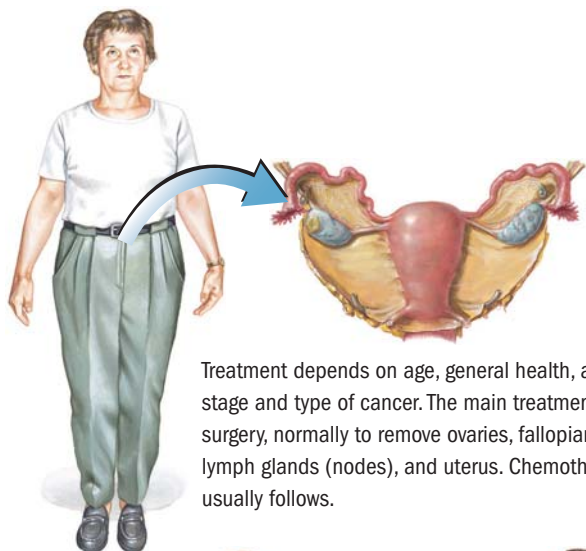
The cause isn't clear, but certain things can increase chances of getting it. The most important are age and having relatives who had it. Others are obesity, having breast cancer, starting periods early, and going through menopause late. Some other factors, such as having children, breast feeding, and using birth control pills, can lower the chances.

## What Are the Symptoms of Ovarian Cancer?

The most common symptoms are vague or mild and include discomfort or a heavy feeling in the lower abdomen (belly), loss of appetite, and weight loss or gain. Others are abnormal periods, back pain, nausea, and loss of appetite.

## How Is Ovarian Cancer Diagnosed?

The doctor may suspect cancer because of symptoms and physical examination. Imaging tests (such as ultrasonography) can suggest the possibility of cancer. Biopsy is the only way to tell whether a mass in the ovary is cancer. In a biopsy, a small piece of tissue is surgically removed and studied with a microscope. The doctor also uses the surgery to find out the stage (extent) of a cancer. The stage relates to how far the cancer spread. Sometimes, tumor markers (CA-125, a substance found in blood) may help diagnosis.



Treatment depends on age, general health, and the stage and type of cancer. The main treatment is surgery, normally to remove ovaries, fallopian tubes, lymph glands (nodes), and uterus. Chemotherapy usually follows.



Tell your doctor about any history of cancer in your family.



Live a healthy lifestyle, with increased fruits, vegetables, and whole grains and less fat in your diet. Keep to your ideal weight, and exercise.



If your diagnosis has been confirmed or you are anxious as you wait for results, find out about local or online support groups you can join.

## How Is Ovarian Cancer Treated?

Treatment depends on the location and stage of disease, type of cancer, and age and general health. The main treatment is surgery, usually to remove ovaries, fallopian tubes, lymph glands (nodes), and uterus. Special doctors called gynecologic oncologists are the best doctors for treatment.

Drugs (chemotherapy) and radiation therapy are other choices.

## DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Ovarian Cancer:

- ✓ **DO** tell your doctor about relatives with ovarian cancer.
- ✓ **DO** remember, if you have not yet gone through menopause, that removing your ovaries and uterus means that you cannot become pregnant. You'll also go through menopause.
- ✓ **DO** ask your doctor about emotional and social support groups in your community.
- ✓ **DO** tell your doctor about medicine side effects.
- ✓ **DO** live a healthy lifestyle. Eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains and less fat. Keep to your ideal weight. Exercise.
- ⊘ **DON'T** miss follow-up doctor appointments.

### FROM THE DESK OF

### NOTES

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

#### Contact the following sources:

- American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
**Website:** <http://www.acog.org>
- WebMD  
**Website:** <http://www.webmd.com>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
**Websites:** <http://womenshealth.gov>  
<http://www.4women.gov/faq/ovarian.htm>