

September – Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month

OVARIAN CANCER

STATISTICS

- During 2005, 696 women in Michigan were newly diagnosed with ovarian cancer.
- In 2007, 533 women in Michigan died of the disease.
- Ovarian cancer causes more deaths than any other cancer of the female reproductive system, yet it accounts for only about 3 percent of all cancers in women.
- About 90 percent of women who get ovarian cancer are older than 40, with the greatest number being age 55 or older.
- Ovarian cancer has a high death rate because 70% of cases are not diagnosed before the cancer has spread beyond the ovary.

SCREENING TEST*

Currently, there is **no** effective screening test for ovarian cancer.

*The CA-125 test has a high false-positive rate and is considered to be “not adequate” as an early detection tool when used alone.

RISK FACTORS

There is no way to know for sure who will get ovarian cancer. Most women get it without being at high risk. However, there are several factors that may increase the chance that you will get ovarian cancer, including if you:

- Are middle-aged or older.
- Have close family members (such as your mother, sister, aunt, or grandmother) on either your mother’s or your father’s side who have had ovarian cancer.
- Have had breast, uterine, or colorectal cancer.
- Have an Eastern European (Ashkenazi) Jewish background.
- Have never given birth or have had trouble getting pregnant.
- Have endometriosis (a condition where tissue from the lining of the uterus grows elsewhere in the body).

There is no known way to prevent ovarian cancer. But these things may lower your chance of getting ovarian cancer:

- Having used birth control pills for more than five years.
- Having had a tubal ligation (getting your tubes tied), both ovaries removed, or hysterectomy (an operation in which the uterus, and sometimes cervix, is removed).
- Having given birth.

RESOURCES

American Cancer Society
<http://www.cancer.org>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/ovarian/>

The Gynecologic Cancer Foundation
<http://www.thegcf.org>

Michigan Department of Community Health
<http://www.michigan.gov/cancer>

National Cancer Institute
<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/ovarian>

Michigan Department
of Community Health



Jennifer M. Granholm, Governor
Janet Olszewski, Director

September 2009

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Ovarian cancer often causes signs and symptoms. See your health care provider if you have any of these signs every day for two weeks or longer and they are not normal for you, especially if they get worse:

- Pain in the pelvic or abdominal area (the area below your stomach and in between your hip bones).
- Back pain.
- Being tired all the time.
- Bloating, this is when the area below your stomach swells or feels full.
- A change in your bathroom habits, such as having to pass urine badly or very often.
- An upset stomach or heartburn.
- Discharge from your vagina that is not normal for you.

Also, see your health care provider if you have any bleeding from your vagina that is not normal for you, particularly if you are past menopause. These symptoms may be caused by something other than cancer, but the only way to know is to see your health care provider. Treatment is most effective when ovarian cancer is found and treated early.

FAMILY HISTORY

Women who have inherited certain altered (mutated) genes have a much higher risk of developing ovarian cancer.

These mutations may be found on:

- BRCA1
- BRCA2
- hereditary nonpolyposis colon cancer (HNPCC) genes

Although women with a BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutation are at higher risk for ovarian cancer, only 10% of women with ovarian cancer have one of these mutations.

The majority of women diagnosed with ovarian cancer do NOT have a strong family history for developing the disease.