

Ovarian Cancer

Ovarian cancer is cancer that begins in a woman's ovaries, located on each side of the pelvis. Approximately 22,430 new cases will be diagnosed in 2007 and about 15,280 women will die from the disease. Tumors in the ovary are named for the type of cell from which they begin: germ cell tumors; stromal tumors; epithelial tumors; and primary peritoneal carcinoma.

PREVENTION

While there is no proven way to prevent ovarian cancer, research has shown that some things may help reduce risk:

- The use of oral contraceptives
- Tubal ligation or hysterectomy
- Pregnancy and breast feeding
- A diet high in plant foods like vegetables

RISKS

Some of the risk factors for the most common (epithelial) type of ovarian cancer are:

- Aging
- Women who have never had children
- Long term use of fertility drugs and hormone replacement therapy
- Family history of ovarian cancer and personal history of breast cancer
- Obesity

SYMPTOMS

- Unusual vaginal bleeding
- Pelvic pressure or back or leg pain
- Unexpected weight loss or gain
- Constipation, sense of fullness or pressure in the pelvis
- Abdominal bloating or swelling, indigestion or gas
- Changes in bowel and bladder patterns (frequency or urgency of urination)

EARLY DETECTION

There is yet no easy, non-invasive tool for early diagnosis of ovarian cancer, however, women may ask their doctor to check for the presence of tumors during a gynecological exam. But all women should have periodic thorough pelvic exams. Women at high risk may have transvaginal ultrasound and/or a blood test for the protein CA123.

TREATMENT

- Surgical removal of one ovary and fallopian tube
- Chemotherapy or radiation