

This leaflet has been written to help you understand about cancer of the ovary its diagnosis, treatment and support available. You may wish to discuss some aspects with your doctor or support nurse (named at the back of this leaflet)

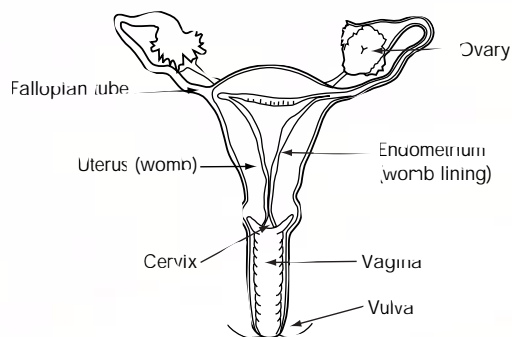
What is Cancer?

The organs of the body are made up of cells. Cancer is a disease of these cells. The cells normally divide in an orderly manner. Sometimes the cells divide out of control - developing into a lump/tumour. A tumour which is malignant consists of cancer cells which have the ability to spread beyond the original site, destroying surrounding tissue, sometimes they can break away and spread to other parts of the body.

The Ovaries

The ovaries are two small oval shaped organs in the female pelvis, they form part of the female reproductive system. Each month in women of childbearing age, an egg is released from the ovary and travels to the womb. If the egg is not fertilised by sperm it passes out of the womb and the lining of the womb sheds, this is a period.

The ovaries also produce the female hormones, oestrogen and progesterone. In the menopause these hormones decrease and periods gradually stop.



How does Cancer of the Ovary develop?

We may not know the exact cause of your cancer, however it is more common in women who have not had children. There is evidence to suggest that women who take the contraceptive pill are less likely to develop this sort of cancer. An inherited gene in the family causes a small percentage of ovarian cancers. It may be necessary to obtain a profile of your family to decide if a genetic referral is appropriate. Please ask your nurse specialist if you are concerned about this.

What are the signs & symptoms?

Unfortunately most women with cancer of the ovary have vague symptoms only and the disease may be advanced before diagnosis is made. Some symptoms may include:

- Loss of appetite
- Vague indigestion, nausea, bloating

- Swelling of the abdomen
- Pain in the lower abdomen
- Vaginal bleeding - although this is rare.

These symptoms may also be due to other conditions, you should seek a medical opinion.

Diagnosing Cancer of the Ovary

A full medical history will be undertaken and a number of other tests may be carried out, before a definite diagnosis can be made. This may include a vaginal examination. Sometimes the doctor may wish to examine your back passage.

The doctor may arrange a chest x-ray, blood test, including a tumour marker CA125 and a CAT scan, all these investigations will be explained to you. See hospital information leaflets.

Stages of Cancer

Staging is a process of investigations which may be used to determine type/size of the tumour and if there is any spread. Staging is important to help decide treatment options.

Stages of Cancer of the ovary

The following stages are used for cancer of the ovary.

- Stage 1 Cancer is limited to the ovaries.
- Stage 2 Cancer cells have spread to the pelvis.
- Stage 3 Cancer cells have spread outside the ovaries, and spread outside the pelvis.
- Stage 4 Cancer cells have spread beyond the pelvis to other parts of the body including the liver or lungs.
- Recurrent Disease Recurrent disease means the cancer has come back (recurred) after it has been treated.

Treatment options

There are two main treatment options for cancer of the ovary,

- Surgery
- Chemotherapy

The best option for you will be decided by your consultant following discussion with you.

Clinical Trials

Research into new methods of treating cancer of the ovary are going on all the time. You may be asked to consider taking part in a clinical trial.

Clinical trials are research studies involving patients which compare a different type of medical care with the best treatment currently available. You may be approached regarding a clinical trial which your consultant or specialist nu

will be able to discuss with you. CancerBacup produce a booklet which may be helpful to you. The type of treatment will be decided by the consultant in discussion with yourself.

Surgery

Surgical treatment involves the removal of the uterus (womb), ovaries, cervix and the fallopian tubes; also removed will be a curtain of fat from the abdomen called the omentum. During the surgery the surgeon will examine the lymph nodes in the pelvis and will remove any that feel abnormal. This is called a Laparotomy - Total Abdominal Hysterectomy Bilateral Salpingo Oophorectomy, (TAH + BSO) and Infa-colic Omentectomy. To ensure the surgeon can operate effectively you will need to have a mid line incision. See hospital information leaflet for specific information.

Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy means drug treatment. In ovarian cancer it can be used to destroy or control cancer cells. The treatment is given in specialist units or a cancer centre and your nurse specialist will tell you where your treatment will be. It is usually given one day a month for 6 months. The chemotherapy can be given before or after surgery and your management plan will be discussed with you before treatment begins. Chemotherapy may in some cases be given in tablet form. (See Oncology

booklet & specific information sheets).

Life and Relationships

- Most people feel overwhelmed when they are told they have cancer.
- Many different emotions arise which can cause confusion and frequent changes of mood.
- Reactions differ from one person to another.
- There is no right or wrong way to feel.
- You may experience the whole range of personal emotions and reactions both similar or different from family and friends.
- Support and guidance is available in coping with these feelings.
- Many people find great comfort in their faith and or religious and spiritual beliefs.

Following the diagnosis of cancer and your subsequent treatment, you may experience physical changes. There may be some issues/concerns you wish to raise /explore, i.e.

- Body Image
- Sexual Health
- Menopause Symptoms
- Others

Your support nurse (named at the end of this leaflet) will be able to support you by explaining about the issue /concern and provide advice and information if required. This may help you adjust /

cope with these changes. This may include involvement of other members of the Health Care Team (HCT) i.e.

- Dietician
- Lymphoedema Practitioner
- Physiotherapist, Occupational Therapist and your Primary Health Care Team (PHCT), General Practitioner (GP), District Nurse (DN), Community Macmillan Nurse (CM)

You may not be aware of who can help with changes in social and financial matters, but your support nurse can put you in touch with the relevant people who can provide guidance and advice in these and other aspects, including childcare, how to tell the children and practical day to day issues.

You may wish to explore information and coping methods to help yourself. Therefore the following booklets may be helpful, (there are many others).

- Adjusting to life after cancer - CancerBacup
- Close relationships & cancer - Cancerlink
- Life with cancer - Cancerlink
- Understanding Clinical trials - Cancerbacup

Complementary Therapies

Complementary therapies may be helpful to you and your family. There are many different types i.e.

- Reflexology
- Massage
- Relaxation

and many others. Your support nurse advise you by providing information regarding the appropriateness for you and how to access them.

Your Follow up Care

This will be tailored to your specific needs. The doctors will see you on a regular basis in the outpatient department (OPD). If you develop any further symptoms the doctor will see you promptly and may start further investigations.

Your Gynae Support Nurse / Clinical Nurse Specialist named on this leaflet will also be able to offer you and your family advice, information and support regarding your cancer, subsequent treatment and associated health issues.

Equal Opportunities

The hospital is committed to promoting an environment, which provides equal opportunities for all patients, visitors and staff. If you have special requirements such as dietary needs, interpreter services, disability needs or a preference for a female doctor, please do not hesitate to discuss this with a member of staff who will try to help you.

Support Networks Available

Further information, advice and support is available for you/partner family from:

Locally

CANCER RESOURCE STORE
Tel: 0151 709 6161
SEFTON CANCER SUPPORT GROUP
Tel: 0151 521 5179
CANCER SUPPORT CENTRE
Tel: 0151 726 8934

Nationally

CANCERBACUP
Tel: 0808 800 1234
CANCERLINK
Tel: 0808 808 0000
MACMILLAN INFORMATION
Tel: 0845 601 6161
GYNAE C
Tel: 01793 338885
OVACOME
Tel: 07071 781861

Website information may be obtained from your hospital, local and national support networks above.

Ask your support nurse for a free copy of the Cancer Guide, which can guide, support and inform you through your cancer experience.

Personal contact

Name

Tel No

Support Nurse

Hospital Macmillan Nurse

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District Nurse

Other

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Questions you may wish to ask

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References

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CancerBacup (1993) Understanding Cancer of the Ovary

CancerBacup (1996) Understanding Clinical Trials



Cancer of the Ovary

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