

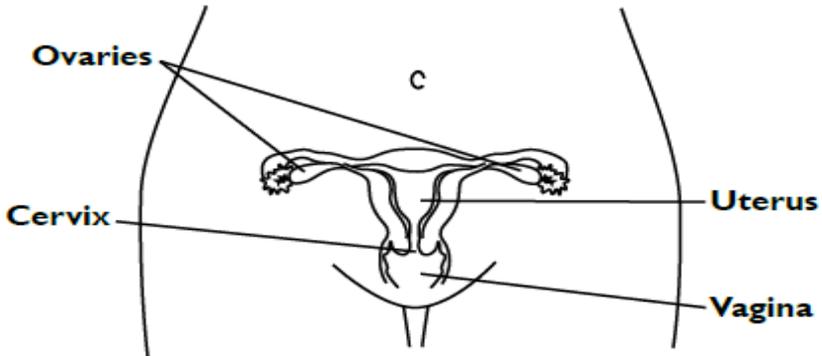


Protect Yourself from Ovarian Cancer

CHARLES B. WANG COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER
王嘉廉社區醫療中心

What Is Ovarian Cancer?

Ovarian cancer starts when cells grow out of control in the ovaries. Ovaries are the reproductive organs where eggs are made and stored. Many do not know they have ovarian cancer until it spreads past the ovaries. To detect cancer early, learn about your risks and note changes in your body.



What Are the Risk Factors?

Middle-aged and older women are at greatest risk for ovarian cancer. There are other factors that raise your risk:

- Personal history of breast or colorectal cancer
- Family history of ovarian cancer
- A gene mutation called BRCA1 or BRCA2
- Having never given birth or had trouble getting pregnant
- Having endometriosis (tissue from the lining of the uterus grows outside the uterus)



What Are the Signs?

Signs of ovarian cancer are often unclear and confused for other conditions. It is important to pay attention to your body and note anything odd. Signs include:



Upset stomach (e.g., bloating, cramps, stomach pain, indigestion)



Back or pelvic pain



More urgent and frequent urination or constipation



Feeling full quickly during meals



Vaginal discomfort (e.g., pain during sex, change in period flow)

If you have any of these signs that cannot otherwise be explained for more than two weeks, talk to your provider immediately.

How Do I Get Screened for Ovarian Cancer?

There is no recommended test for those at average risk for ovarian cancer. For those at higher risk, there are two tests often used to find ovarian cancer early:

- **Transvaginal ultrasound (TVUS):** This painless test uses sound waves to examine the uterus, fallopian tubes, and ovaries by putting an ultrasound wand into the vagina. The test checks for growths inside the pelvis.
- **CA-125 test:** This test detects CA-125, a substance often found in the blood and urine of those with ovarian cancer. However, other conditions can also cause an increase in CA-125. Cancer cannot be confirmed by this test alone.



How Can I Lower My Risks?

Several factors have been shown to reduce the risk of ovarian cancer:

- Pregnancy
- Breastfeeding
- Using birth control pills
- Tubal ligation (tying the fallopian tubes)
- Hysterectomy (removing the uterus)



In general, consider breastfeeding if you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant. Speak with your provider about healthy lifestyle, use of birth control pills, or tubal ligation. Inform your provider if you notice any unusual changes in your body.

If you have a strong family history of ovarian cancer, tell your provider. They may refer you to a genetic counselor or a special doctor. You may also need to be screened regularly for ovarian cancer.

Many at high risk of ovarian cancer who do not wish to have more children opt to have their ovaries and fallopian tubes surgically removed before they show any signs of disease. Talk with your provider about your options and the related risks and benefits.

Learn More



The Charles B. Wang Community Health Center offers a wide range of resources and support for topics related to women's health. If you are uninsured, the Health Center has a sliding fee scale in which the cost of health services is based on your income. To find out more, please call us at (212) 966-0228 (Manhattan) or (718) 886-1287 (Queens).





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