



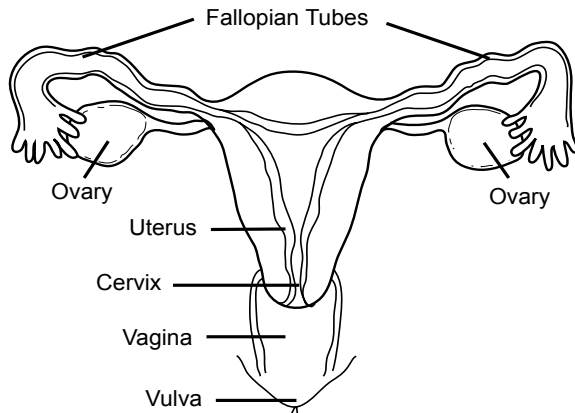
What are Gynecologic Cancers?

Gynecologic cancers are cancers of a woman's reproductive organs. These include cancer of the vulva, vagina, cervix, uterus, fallopian tubes and ovaries.

Who is at Risk?

All women are at some risk; however, your risk of getting gynecologic cancer may depend on your age, family history, and lifestyle.

This information sheet will describe the risks, signs and how to detect gynecologic cancers early.



Ovarian Cancer

The Facts:

- More women die of ovarian cancer than any other gynecologic cancer
- Ovarian cancer is the second most common gynecologic cancer

The Risks:

- The risk for developing ovarian cancer increases:
 - ~ with age, especially after age 50
 - ~ with a family history of ovarian cancer
 - ~ if you had breast cancer
 - ~ in women who have not had children

The Warning Signs:

- Symptoms are often not obvious until the disease is advanced, and may include:
 - ~ abdominal bloating, swelling and/or pain or a lump
 - ~ abnormal vaginal bleeding
 - ~ persistent digestive problems including stomach discomfort, gas, nausea

Early Detection:

- Discuss with your doctor or medical care provider:
 - ~ regular recto-vaginal pelvic exams (usually 1-3 years)
 - ~ special screening tests such as ultrasound and the CA 125 blood test for women at high risk

Uterine Cancer (Endometrial Cancer)

The Facts:

- Most uterine cancer begins in the lining of the uterus, the endometrium
- Cancer of the uterus is the most common gynecologic cancer in women

The Risks:

- The risk for developing uterine cancer increases:
 - ~ with age, especially over age 50
 - ~ with obesity, diabetes, or high blood pressure
 - ~ with estrogen replacement therapy without supplemental progestin
 - ~ in women who have menopause after age 52
 - ~ in women who have not had children
 - ~ in women who take tamoxifen

The Warning Signs:

- Abnormal vaginal bleeding, spotting, or discharge
- Abnormal bloating, pelvic fullness or cramping
- Unexplained weight loss or gain

Early Detection:

- Discuss with your doctor or medical care provider:
 - ~ regular recto-vaginal pelvic exams (usually 1-3 years)
 - ~ healthy eating and exercise to maintain desirable weight.

(Cont. on Back)



Cervical Cancer

The Facts:

- Cervical cancer is almost completely preventable with regular screening
- A Pap test can detect abnormal cells before they become cancer

The Risks:

- The risk for developing cervical cancer increases:
 - ~ in women who do not receive regular Pap tests and pelvic exams
 - ~ if you or your sex partner have or have had multiple sex partners
 - ~ if you have a history of genital warts or HPV (human papillomavirus) infection
 - ~ if you smoke

The Warning Signs:

- Frequently there are no symptoms associated with cervical cancer
- Abnormal bleeding, spotting or discharge from the vagina
- Back or leg pain

Early Detection:

- Discuss with your doctor or medical care provider:
 - ~ regular recto-vaginal pelvic exams and Pap tests (usually 1-3 years)
 - ~ safer sex

Less Common Gynecologic Cancers

The Facts:

- Cancer of the vagina, vulva and fallopian tubes are rare. These cancers share some of the same risk factors.

The Risks:

- Increasing age, especially after age 50
- Women with a history of gynecologic cancer, especially cervical cancer
- Women with a history of genital warts or HPV (human papillomavirus) infection

Early Detection:

- Discuss with your doctor or medical care provider:
 - ~ regular recto-vaginal pelvic exams (usually 1-3 years).

Early Detection is Your Best Protection

Visit your doctor or a Student Health Services medical care provider regularly for a recto-vaginal pelvic examination including a Pap smear.

During the examination, your doctor or nurse will check your reproductive organs, bladder, and rectum to be sure that the size and shape seem normal. They will check for the presence of tumors, cysts or lumps and other warning signs.

This is a good time to talk to your doctor about any problem, symptom or changes you have noticed and to ask questions about your gynecologic health. Take this information sheet with you if you need help. Do not hesitate to ask any question you have. It could save your life!

For more information about screening, diagnostic tests and treatment of gynecologic cancers, contact:

The Cancer Information Service
1-800-4-CANCER
<http://cancernet.nci.nih.gov/index.html>

The American Cancer Society
1-800-ACS-2345
<http://www.cancer.org/>

Gynecologic Cancer Foundation
1-800-444-4441
<http://www.sgo.org/gcf/>

National Ovarian Cancer Coalition
1-800-OVARIAN
<http://www.ovarian.org/index.cfm>

National Cervical Cancer Coalition
1-800-685-5531
<http://www.nccc-online.org/>

(Information provided by courtesy of California Department of Health Services, www.dhs.ca.gov/director/owh)