

# Living beyond Ovarian Cancer and Navigating Life after Treatment

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Ovarian cancer is a type of cancer that starts in the ovaries, the female reproductive organs that produce eggs. It is the fifth leading cause of cancer deaths in women, with over 21,000 new cases and over 13,000 deaths in the United States each year. Ovarian cancer is often difficult to diagnose early, which can make it more challenging to treat. In this article, we will discuss the symptoms of ovarian cancer, how it is diagnosed, and the treatment options available [1].

Ovarian cancer often does not cause any symptoms in its early stages. As the cancer progresses, however, women may experience the following symptoms:

- Abdominal bloating or swelling
- Pain in the pelvic or abdominal area
- Difficulty eating or feeling full quickly
- Urgency or frequency of urination
- Fatigue or low energy
- Changes in bowel habits, such as constipation or diarrhoea
- Back pain
- Abnormal vaginal bleeding or discharge

It is important to note that these symptoms can be caused by many conditions other than ovarian cancer. However, if you experience any of these symptoms for more than a few weeks, it is important to talk to your healthcare provider [2].

Diagnosing ovarian cancer can be challenging because there are no widely recommended screening tests for the general population. If your healthcare provider suspects that you may have ovarian cancer based on your symptoms or other factors, they may recommend the following tests

**Pelvic Exam:** Your healthcare provider will examine your ovaries and uterus for any abnormalities.

**Imaging Tests:** Imaging tests, such as ultrasounds, CT scans, and MRIs, can help visualize the ovaries and any tumours.

**Blood Tests:** Blood tests can measure certain proteins, such as CA-125, which are often elevated in women with ovarian cancer.

However, CA-125 levels can also be elevated in other conditions, such as endometriosis, so it is not a definitive test for ovarian cancer.

**Biopsy:** A biopsy involves removing a small piece of tissue from the ovary and examining it under a microscope for cancer cells. This is often done during surgery to remove the ovary.

The treatment of ovarian cancer depends on the stage of the cancer, the size and location of the tumour, and the woman's overall health. Treatment options may include surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation therapy [3].

**Surgery:** Surgery is often the first line of treatment for ovarian cancer. The goal of surgery is to remove as much of the tumor as possible. Depending on the stage of the cancer, the surgeon may remove one or both ovaries, the fallopian tubes, the uterus, and other tissues or lymph nodes.

**Chemotherapy:** Chemotherapy is a treatment that uses drugs to kill cancer cells. It can be given before or after surgery to shrink the tumor or to kill any remaining cancer cells.

**Radiation Therapy:** Radiation therapy uses high-energy X-rays to kill cancer cells. It is not commonly used to treat ovarian cancer, but it may be used in certain situations [4].

The prognosis for ovarian cancer depends on the stage of the cancer and the woman's overall health. Ovarian cancer is often diagnosed in its later stages, which can make it more challenging to treat. However, women who are diagnosed with ovarian cancer in its early stages have a better chance of survival. There is no sure way to prevent ovarian cancer. However, there are some steps that women can take to reduce their risk of developing ovarian cancer [5].

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