

What Women Need to Know About...

WOMEN'S CANCERS



What are Women's Cancers?

These are cancers that begin in a woman's reproductive organs.

Unless treated, these cancers spread and destroy nearby normal tissues. This is harmful to a woman's health and can cause death.

The good news is that when these women's cancers are found early, treatment is most effective!

Common Women's Cancers:

- **Cancer of the Uterus** – the uterus is a pear-shaped organ in the lower belly where a baby grows during pregnancy.
- **Cancer of the Ovaries** – the ovaries are two organs – one on each side of the uterus – which produce eggs and female hormones.
- **Cancer of the Cervix** – the cervix forms a canal which connects lower part of the uterus to the vagina (birth canal).

Women's cancers can also occur in the vagina, vulva and fallopian tubes - but these are less common.

Am I at Risk for Women's Cancers?

All women have some risk. In California, 1 in 22 women have a lifetime risk of being diagnosed with uterine, ovarian or cervical cancer. These risk factors can increase your chances of getting uterine, ovarian or cervical cancer:

- **Chronic Conditions Increase Your Risk for Uterine Cancer**
 - Being overweight or obese
 - Having diabetes
 - Having high blood pressure

- Having endometriosis
polycystic ovaries

- **Prolonged Exposure to Estrogen Increases**

Your Risk for Uterine & Ovarian Cancers

- Starting your period before age 12
- Starting menopause after age 52
- Never being pregnant and giving birth
- Giving birth to 1st child after age 30
- Having menopause hormone therapy

- **History of Cancer Increases Your Risk for Uterine & Ovarian Cancers**

- Having had breast cancer
- Being treated with tamoxifen
- Having a family member who has had breast, colorectal or ovarian cancer

- **Smoking Increases Your Risk for Cervical Cancer**

- **Sexual History Increases Your Risk for Cervical Cancer**

- Having had many sex partners
- Having a sex partner who has had many sex partners
- Having sexual intercourse for the 1st time before the age of 16

Tell your doctor if you have any of these risk factors!

Do I Have Any Signs or Symptoms?

Know what is normal for your body. If you notice changes in your body and tell your doctor, the cancer may be found earlier. When women's cancers are found early, treatment is more likely to be effective.



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What Can I Do to Protect Myself?

Talk with your doctor right away if you have any of these warning signs:

- Bleeding, spotting or discharge from the vagina that is unexpected or unusual
- Pain, a full feeling, cramps or a lump in the belly that does not go away
- Weight gain or weight loss without trying
- Increase in size of the stomach or bloating
- Nausea or discomfort in the stomach or lower belly that does not go away
- Pain when having sex or bleeding after having sex
- Urgent or more frequent urination

Get a regular well-woman check-up

- Get regular cervical cancer screening:
 - Pap test - starting at age 21
 - HPV test - starting at age 30
- Continue getting Pap tests every 2 years up to age 30. Pap tests may be done every 3 years for women 30 years and older who have 3 negative Pap test results in a row.
- Discuss your risk factors with your doctor to see if you need more frequent screening.
- Get a pelvic exam starting at age 21 – and ask your doctor how often you need to have a pelvic exam.

Don't smoke and maintain a healthy weight

Limit your exposure to HPV

- Have sexual contact with only one person who only has sex with you.
- Limit number of sex partners during lifetime
- Delay sexual involvement until at least age 16
- Ask about the HPV vaccine

Do these things for yourself & your loved ones!

For more information, contact:

CDC Inside Knowledge Campaign www.cdc.gov

Federal Women's Health www.womenshealth.gov

American Cancer Society www.cancer.org

National Cancer Institute www.cancer.gov/cancer

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
www.acog.org

These handouts are available to download at:

www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/owh

To request this information in Braille, audiocassette, large print or computer disk, contact OWH at 916-440-7626.



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WOMEN'S
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