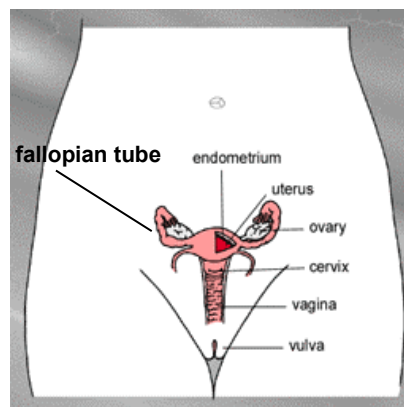




September is Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Month

What Is Gynecologic Cancer?

Gynecologic or female cancer is the growth and spread of cancer cells in the cervix, ovaries, uterus, fallopian tubes, vagina, and vulva. These are also known as the reproductive organs.



What Are the Key Statistics About Gynecologic Cancer?

The American Cancer Society estimates that 88,080 women in the United States will be diagnosed with cancers of the female reproductive organs this year. Cancer of the endometrium, which is the lining of the uterus, is the most common gynecological cancer. Ovarian cancer ranks fifth as a cause of cancer deaths among women and causes more deaths than any other cancer of the female reproductive system. It is estimated that as many as 29,590 women will die in 2011 from gynecological cancers.

Who's At Risk for Gynecologic Cancer?

- Any woman is at risk of developing gynecologic cancer.
- Uterine or **endometrial cancer** risk factors include obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes, menopause at a late age, and the use of certain medications such as birth control pills, estrogen, and tamoxifen use.
- The risk of **ovarian cancer** increases with age, but the greatest risk factor is a family history of ovarian cancer. Not having been pregnant is also a risk factor.

- **Cervical cancer** risk factors include smoking, early age of first intercourse, a high number of sex partners, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV infection is one of the most common sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Some types of HPVs may cause warts to appear on or around the genitals or anus. Genital warts (technically known as condylomata acuminatum) are most commonly associated with two HPV types, numbers 6 and 11. Warts may appear within several weeks after sexual contact with a person who has HPV, or they may take months or years to appear; or they may never appear. HPVs may also cause flat, abnormal growths in the genital area and on the cervix (the lower part of the uterus that extends into the vagina). HPV infections often do not cause any symptoms.
 - On June 8, 2006, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the use of a new vaccine to prevent infection from four types of HPV. Two of the HPV types targeted by the vaccine (HPV-16 and HPV-18) are responsible for about 70 percent of the cases of cervical cancer worldwide. The other two HPV types (HPV-6 and HPV-11) cause approximately 90 percent of the cases of genital warts. If you would like further information about the vaccine, talk to your healthcare team or visit the National Cancer Institute's Understanding Cancer Series: The HPV Vaccine at: www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/understandingcancer/HPV-vaccine
- **Vulvar and vaginal cancers** may be linked to HPV.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of Gynecologic Cancer?

Uterine or Endometrial

- Bleeding in a women who has gone through menopause
- Irregular vaginal bleeding in a women before menopause

Ovarian

The initial symptoms of ovarian cancer are common complaints of woman. This is why it may not be detected early. These symptoms include:

- Pressure or a feeling of fullness in the pelvis
- Abdominal bloating
- Changes in your normal bowel or bladder patterns

Cervical

- Abnormal bleeding between periods
- Bleeding after sexual intercourse
- Vaginal discharge that has a foul smell, unusual color, or is more than usual.

Vulva

The most common symptom of vulvar cancer is itching of the vulva. Other symptoms include:

- Burning, pain, or other discomfort
- A sore on the vulva
- Changes in skin color

What are the Recommendations for Early Detection and Screening?

Uterine or Endometrial

Early detection refers to testing to find a disease such as cancer in people who do not have symptoms of that disease. At this time, there are no early detection tests recommended for women without symptoms.

The American Cancer Society recommends that women at increased risk (see risk factors above) see their doctor for routine yearly examinations and whenever there is any abnormal uterine bleeding.

Ovarian

Tests such as a routine pelvic exam, ultrasonography (the use of sound waves to form a picture of the ovaries and thus see abnormalities), and CA 125 measurement (a blood test that is present sometimes if cancer is in the body) may be used if a woman is at high risk for ovarian cancer.

Cervical

All women should begin cervical cancer screening about 3 years after they begin having vaginal intercourse, but no later than when they are 21 years old. Screening should be done every year.

Vulva

Having pelvic examinations and being alert to any signs and symptoms of vulvar cancer greatly improves the chances of early detection and successful treatment.

Cancer Prevention Clinical Trials

Prevention trials are research studies designed to answer important questions about the early detection and prevention of cancer. People who have certain health conditions may be able to participate in some of these trials. By finding and getting rid of abnormal cells, we may be able to prevent cancer. You can be part of our program to prevent cancer by participating in one of these trials. Participation in research studies *can* cure cancer!

For information about nationwide cancer prevention trials, you can call the **National Cancer Institute at 1-800-4 CANCER** or visit their Web site at **www.cancer.gov**.

Where Can I Find Further Information?

The Resource and Learning Center

www.cinj.org/rlc/

(732) 235-9639

National Cancer Institute

1-800-4-CANCER

www.cancer.gov

The American Cancer Society
1-800-ACS-2345
www.cancer.org

The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
www.acog.org

Foundation for Women's Cancer
1-800-444-4441
<http://www.foundationforwomenscancer.org>

Understanding Cancer Series: The HPV Vaccine
www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/understandingcancer/HPV-vaccine
1-8900-4 CANCER