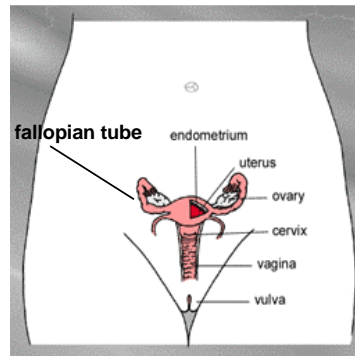


## September is Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Month

### What is Gynecologic Cancer?

Gynecologic (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?

It is estimated that 114,810 women in the United States will be diagnosed with cancers of the reproductive organs in 2023 and 34,020 will die from the disease. Cancer of the endometrium, which is the lining of the uterus, is the most common gynecologic 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.

### Who's at risk for gynecologic cancer?

Any woman is at risk of developing gynecologic cancer.

#### Uterine or endometrial cancer risk factors include:

- Increased age
- Obesity
- Family history of endometrial or colorectal cancer
- Having had breast cancer, ovarian cancer or endometrial hyperplasia
- Type 2 diabetes
- Menopause at a late age
- Certain medicine that affect hormone levels such as taking estrogen after menopause, and tamoxifen
- Use of an intrauterine device (IUD)
- Prior radiation treatment to the pelvis

#### Ovarian cancer risk factors include:

- Family history of ovarian cancer, breast cancer or colorectal cancer
- Increased age
- Reproductive history such as not having been pregnant, fertility treatment
- Hormone replacement
- Obesity

- Having had breast cancer, endometriosis or pelvic inflammatory disease

**Cervical cancer** risk factors include:

- Human papillomavirus (HPV)
- Chlamydia infection
- Long-term use of oral contraceptives
- Having 3 or more full-term pregnancies
- First full-term pregnancy in women younger than 20 years old
- Smoking
- Early age of first intercourse
- A high number of sex partners
- Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)

**Vulvar cancer** risk factors include:

- HPV
- Smoking
- Increased age
- HIV
- Vulvar intraepithelial neoplasia
- Lichen sclerosis (LSA)
- History of cervical cancer

**Vaginal cancers** risk factors include:

- HPV
- Smoking
- Increased age
- Diethylstilbestrol (DES)
- Vaginal adenosis
- Having had cervical cancer
- Alcohol
- HIV
- Vaginal irritation
- History of cervical cancer

**What are the signs and symptoms of gynecologic cancer?**

**Uterine or Endometrial**

- Unusual vaginal bleeding, spotting or other discharge
- Pelvic pain
- Feeling a mass
- Losing weight without trying

**Ovarian cancer**

- Bloating
- Pelvic or abdominal pain
- Trouble eating or feeling full quickly
- Changes in your normal bowel or bladder patterns
- Fatigue
- Upset stomach
- Back pain
- Pain during sex

- Changes in a woman's period, such as heavy or irregular bleeding
- Abdominal swelling with weight loss

### **Cervical cancer**

- Abnormal vaginal bleeding
- Unusual discharge
- Pain during sex
- Pain in the pelvic region
- Swelling of the legs
- Problems urinating or having a bowel movement
- Blood in the urine

### **Vulva cancer**

- Itching
- Burning, pain, or other discomfort
- An open sore
- Changes in skin color
- A bump or lump
- Thickening of the skin
- Abnormal bleeding or discharge

### **Vaginal cancer**

- Abnormal vaginal bleeding
- Abnormal vaginal discharge
- A mass or lump in the vagina
- Pain during sex

## **What are the recommendations for early detection and screening?**

Early detection refers to testing to find a disease such as cancer in people who do not have symptoms of that disease.

### **Uterine or Endometrial**

There are no recommended screening tests for women without symptoms.

The American Cancer Society recommends that women at increased risk see their provider for a yearly exam and whenever there is any abnormal uterine bleeding.

### **Ovarian**

There are no recommended screening tests for asymptomatic women. Tests such as a pelvic exam with transvaginal ultrasound and CA 125 tumor marker blood test may be performed if a woman is at high risk for ovarian cancer.

### **Cervical**

- All women should begin cervical cancer screening at age 25.
- Women aged 25-65 years old should have a primary HPV test every 5 years.
- Women over age 65 who have had regular cervical cancer testing in the past 10 years with normal results and no history of cervical pre-cancer or cancer within the past 25 years can stop being tested
- Women with a history of cervical pre-cancer should continue to be tested for at least 25 years after that diagnosis, even if testing continues past age 65.
- Women who have had a total hysterectomy (removal of the uterus and cervix) can stop having cervical cancer screening, unless the surgery was done as a treatment for cervical cancer or pre-cancer.

## **Vulva**

Having routine pelvic exams and being alert to any signs and symptoms of vulvar cancer greatly improves the chances of early detection and successful treatment. A lesion in the vulva that itches should be checked-up by your gynecologist.

## **Cancer Prevention Trials at Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey**

If you would like information about clinical trials for preventing cancer, please call Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey's Office of Human Research Services at 732-235-7356. For additional information about nationwide cancer prevention trials, you can call the National Cancer Institute at 1-800-4 CANCEER or visit their website at [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov).

## **Where Can I Find Further Information?**

The Resource and Learning Center

(732) 235-9639

[www.cinj.org/rlc/](http://www.cinj.org/rlc/)

Provides reliable, relevant and current information about all aspects of cancer.

National Cancer Institute

1-800-4-CANCEER

[www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

The American Cancer Society

1-800-ACS-2345

[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

[www.acog.org](http://www.acog.org)

Foundation for Women's Cancer

1-312-578-1439

[www.foundationforwomenscancer.org](http://www.foundationforwomenscancer.org)



RLC website QR code