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News Release

## **Ovarian Cancer Risk Factors, Symptoms and Talking to your Doctor**

Statistics show that one to two women in 100 will develop ovarian cancer in their lifetime, but the risk increases if the woman has any risk factors. Women need to be aware of the risks of developing ovarian cancer, because the sooner the cancer is found, the greater chance of survival. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have identified several risk factors for developing ovarian cancer including the following (these are just a few):

- A woman who has never given birth or has had trouble conceiving
- A woman who has had one or more close relatives (e.g., mother, daughter, sister) who have had the disease
- A woman who has endometriosis
- A woman over 55; although women of any age can develop ovarian cancer.

Symptoms of ovarian cancer can develop 6 to 12 months before the cancer is found. Symptoms include the following:

- constant cramps or pain in your tummy
- constant pain in your pelvis or lower back.
- unusual discharge from your vagina
- constant bloating or intestinal gas that is not relieved by home treatment measures
- a lump that can be felt in your belly.
- changes in your bowel and bladder habits from increasing urinary occurrence to constipation or diarrhea.
- weight loss.

The doctor can then use several laboratory tests to identify ovarian cancer. The three tests include a rectovaginal pelvic exam, a transvaginal ultrasound or a CA-125 blood test. The sooner the cancer is found, the greater the chance of survival.

If you have several of the risk factors and feel you are exhibiting any of the symptoms of ovarian cancer, talk to your doctor about your concerns. Most often these symptoms are not due to cancer, but only a doctor can tell for sure. When you talk with your doctor, be able to describe your symptoms well. You know your body best and know what is normal for you, so feel confident in describing what is different. Women need to be empowered at their doctor's office and not be a passive participant when discussing their health concerns. Health communication is critical: make a list of health concerns before the doctor visit and discuss them to your satisfaction with the doctor. Your doctor wants to help, the more information they have the better the diagnosis they can make. Take control of your health.

Resources Used:

Ask me three.

[http://www.npsf.org/askme3/PCHC/what\\_is\\_ask.php](http://www.npsf.org/askme3/PCHC/what_is_ask.php)

Ovarian Cancer Basic Information.

[www.cdc.gov/cancer/ovarian/basic\\_info](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/ovarian/basic_info)

Ovarian Cancer Awareness. <http://ovariancancerawareness.org/home.aspx>

Screening for Ovarian Cancer, Recommendation Statement. U.S. Preventive Services Task Force 2004

<http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/3rduspstf/ovariancan/ovcanrs.pdf>

Understanding Your Risk of Ovarian Cancer. Gynecologic Cancer Foundation.

[http://www.wcn.org/materials/ovarian\\_cancer\\_risk.html](http://www.wcn.org/materials/ovarian_cancer_risk.html)

What You Need to Know About Ovarian Cancer.

<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/wyntk/ovary/>