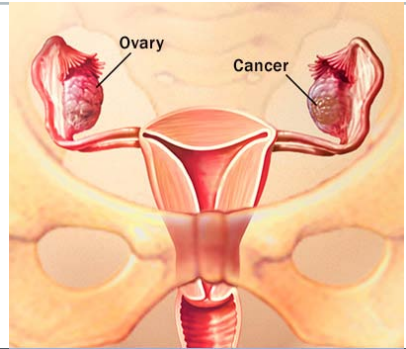


This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Rural Physicians Associate Program (RPAP) at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up to date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.



## Benefits vs. Risks

**Risks:** Getting a false positive test result. This could lead to unnecessary surgery (which carries risk of complications like infection or bleeding) and worry for women who are actually ovarian cancer-free.

**Benefits:** The possibility of detecting a cancer before it becomes advanced and treatment becomes less effective.



## For More Information

National Cancer Institute  
1-800-4-CANCER  
([www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov))

American Cancer Society  
1-800-ACS-2345  
([www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org))

National Ovarian Cancer  
Coalition  
([www.ovarian.org](http://www.ovarian.org))

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ovariancancer.html>

<http://www.cancer.org/Cancer/OvarianCancer/DetailedGuide/>

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# Ovarian Cancer

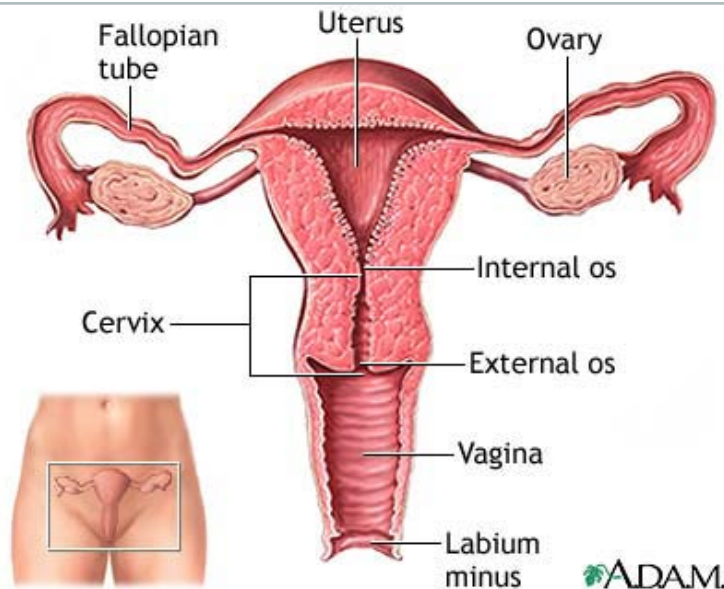


What are my  
risks?



What can I do  
about them?

## How do you get



When you see your doctor for your annual preventive physical, your doctor does an internal examination to check the size of your ovaries. This is currently the standard for screening.

There is a great deal of interest in finding a test that could detect ovarian cancer at an earlier, treatable stage. However, studies have not yet shown that screening tests decrease the risk of dying of ovarian cancer. These include CA-125 blood test and a transvaginal ultrasound.

CA-125 is a protein found in the blood of women with ovarian cancer, but it can also be elevated in other non-cancerous conditions.

Ultrasound can find a mass on the ovaries, but cannot determine if that mass is cancer or something less dangerous, like a cyst.

The bottom line is that these screening tools are not recommended for average risk females at this time. More research is needed.

**Ovarian cancer is so deadly** because it rarely produces any symptoms early in its course. This means that the majority of women don't find out they have it until the cancer is very advanced.

### What are the symptoms of ovarian cancer?

- Bloating
- Pelvic or abdominal pain
- Difficulty eating or feeling full quickly
- Urinary symptoms (urgency or frequency)
- Fatigue
- Upset stomach
- Back pain
- Pain during sex
- Constipation
- Menstrual changes

### What are the risk factors for ovarian cancer?

- Age (increased risk after menopause)
- Family history: mothers, sisters, daughters with prior ovarian or breast cancer
- Genetics (*BRCA-1* or *2*, *HNPCC*)
- Personal history of breast, ovarian, or colorectal cancer.
- Being overweight or obese
- Never being pregnant

### What are factors that can reduce your risk?

- Hormonal birth control
- Pregnancy and breastfeeding
- Tubal ligation for sterilization
- Surgical removal of uterus and/or ovaries