What You Need to Know About Ovarian Cancer Recurrence

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Empowering Recovery

Although you may be ovarian cancer symptom-free now, there's no guarantee that your ovarian cancer will be gone forever. Regular testing is the best way to keep your body strong and your medical team on top of any potential threats. In the end, you stand a much better chance of staying cancer-free when you use all the resources around you.

Mentally Preparing for a Healthy Life after Ovarian Cancer

Many people expect to feel elated once their ovarian cancer goes into remission, but instead, they're faced with a mix of distracting and distressful emotions. One reason for the anxiety is that your life is about to change, and any sort of change can be hard to manage. You may begin to feel:

- Isolated.
- Overwhelmed.
- Depressed.
- Fearful.

Although many post-treatment feelings will fade with time, the fear of your ovarian cancer coming back can be paralyzing and long-lived. Since ovarian cancer symptoms are generally vague and mild, you may mistake benign stomach pain or indigestion for something more severe. Depending on the treatment approach, you may have tenderness or scarring in the area, which can also interfere with your suspicions. Regular testing will help to relieve these suspicions and allow you to begin a healthy, happy life after treatment.

Testing to Protect Against Ovarian Cancer Recurrence

Your doctor will begin to schedule tests soon after your ovarian cancer treatment is finished. The initial tests will monitor your response to treatment and recognize any complications, but you can expect intermittent testing for recurrence, too. Some common testing tools include:

- Careful physical exams.
- X-rays to look for treatment side effects.
- Blood tests for CA-125 tumor marker (for epithelial ovarian cancer).
- Alpha-fetoprotein (AFP) tests (for germ cell tumors).
- HCG hormone tests (for germ cell tumors).

Your doctor may also recommend other tests, depending on your specific case. Don't let your worries, your confidence or anything else interfere with your follow-up appointments: you must keep visiting your doctor regularly in the years to come.

Staying Healthy in the Years to Come

Even if there are no immediate signs of treatment complications or cancer recurrence, your doctor will want to see you every so often for the next several years. In the beginning, your visits will be every three months or so, but they will decrease to every six months by your fourth year after treatment. After year five, you'll probably only need to see your doctor once yearly to ensure you're still in remission.

Unfortunately, epithelial ovarian cancer has a high chance of recurrence. On the other hand, early detection and treatment have an excellent impact, often forcing the cancer back into remission and lengthening the survival rate considerably. Since this cancer is both prone to recurrence and sensitive to treatment, regular testing will be one of the most important elements in your life after ovarian cancer.