How Obesity May Worsen Ovarian Cancer

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Obesity and Ovarian Cancer

Ovarian cancer is becoming more and more common and is expected to be diagnosed in over 21,000 women in 2014. It is a major cause of cancer-related death in women, and well-known ovarian cancer risk factors include advanced age and family history of this form of cancer.

How Is Obesity and Ovarian Cancer Related?

Researchers have found that there is a positive correlation between obesity and ovarian cancer, and that obesity can shorten the cancer's recurrence time and lead to earlier death. Clinicians are researching whether to counsel their patients on other types of intervention will help them lose weight so they will live longer, healthier lives.

One study demonstrated that obese or overweight participants survived cancer-free for about seventeen months on average. This is a dramatic contrast compared to normal or underweight patients who survived cancer-free for twenty-five months on average. This supports the fact that obese women have the lower survival rates compared to women with ideal body weight.

Reasons Obese Women Fare Worse

Some researchers believe that it is harder to detect any type of cancer in obese patients. They are harder to examine and this can lead to a delayed ovarian cancer diagnosis. Operating on overweight people is difficult and technical issues arise more often. Obese patients are at a higher risk for surgical complications than thin people, which results in a lower success rate and higher mortality rate. Many other issues are involved with complicating their treatment. Resistance to insulin can pose a problem; high blood pressure, varicose veins (which can release deadly blood clots), and other problems can impede treatment.

Hormones that are secreted in fat tissue, such as leptin, may cause ovarian cancer cells to grow aggressively. A gene in the fat cells produces the hormone, leptin, but small amounts are secreted by the stomach, epithelium, and placenta. If you become obese, you become less sensitive to the effects of leptin. The body will contain higher levels of leptin as the result. High levels of leptin lead to ovarian cancer and the abnormal growth of cells.

How to Regain Control of your Weight

To reduce your chances of developing ovarian cancer, it is imperative to lose excess fat, especially if the cancer runs in your family.

The goal is to keep a BMI between 18.5 and 24. 9, which is considered normal weight. Avoid crash diets because rapid weight gain and weight loss had also been linked with various medical conditions. Weight loss occurs when individuals will create a calorie deficit- the target is to lose between 5 to 10% of the body weight initially.

Simple lifestyle changes – like decreasing the amount of calories consumed, burning more calories with an exercise program, can be very effective. The best approach is to work with a medical team-including dietician, fitness therapist, psychotherapist, and a doctor specialized in weight loss.

Dietary changes are crucial because a diet is responsible for about 70-80 percent of the weight loss. A caloric deficit can be obtained by eating fewer calories, adding more fresh fruits and vegetables, lean proteins and whole grains, while limiting highly processed foods that are high in fat and sugar, as well as juices and soda.

Improving the fitness level is also important, and the goal should be half an hour to one hour daily of moderate to intense activity (for example swimming, aerobic or jogging)

If diet and exercise can’t bring the weight under control there are medications that can be used, and in some cases, surgery may be an option.