The Symptoms of Ovarian Cancer You Need to Be Aware of

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Ovarian Cancer Symptoms to Be Aware Of

As with most cancers, ovarian cancers are generally not obvious in the early stages. Unfortunately, this is the reason ovarian cancer isn't diagnosed until it is at an advanced stage.

There are no routine screens for ovarian cancer, but if you have a family history of this type of cancer, you should talk to your doctor about genetic testing and monitoring your risk.

If you are diagnosed and treated early enough, the cure rate is 92 percent, according to the American Cancer Society. Early detection generally relies on your being alert to signs and symptoms and seeing a doctor if you develop them.

Most Common Ovarian Cancer Symptoms

The symptoms of ovarian cancer may be different for each woman and these symptoms may or may not be caused by cancer. You are also more likely to have symptoms if the disease has spread beyond the ovaries.

When present, these are the most common symptoms of ovarian cancer:

- **Bloating.** Feeling bloated on most days for a period of at least one month may be a sign of ovarian cancer, so it's important to see your doctor right away. Early detection makes it easier to treat and seeing your doctor this early on could save your life.
- **Pain the abdomen and/or pelvis.** While pelvic pain is a common symptom that women experience monthly due to getting periods, pain is not normal when it persistent. Pain that is completely separate from your period is a concern and should be brought to the attention of your gynecologic doctor.
- **Food troubles or getting full quickly.** If you have occasional indigestion and nausea, it is best to play it safe and see a doctor. Random food troubles, especially ones that have never affected you before, can signal problems if they are lasting for long periods.
- **Urinary problems, including urgency and frequency.** Urinary problems may point to a more serious problem. Pay attention to these especially if you experience bloating, feeling full, and have pelvic or abdominal pain.
- **Fatigue and lack of energy.** If you are consistently tired, you should tell your doctor. As ovarian cancer progresses, cancer cells compete with healthy cells, resulting in extreme fatigue and drained energy levels.
- **Unusual or sudden weight loss or gain.** These are both common symptoms of ovarian cancer, but they are also non-specific symptoms and may be caused by another condition. Nonetheless, you should report any usual weight loss or weight gain to your doctor.
- **Unusual, irregular bleeding.** Bleeding between periods, heavy bleeding or bleeding during sex are possible signs of gynecological cancers in women still getting periods. If you have undergone menopause, any vaginal bleeding should be brought to your doctor's attention.

These symptoms may also be associated with non-cancerous diseases or other cancers. If you have ovarian cancer, your symptoms will be persistent and severe and not normal for you. If these symptoms are consistent over a month's time, you should consult with your doctor.

More Serious Ovarian Cancer Symptoms — Progressed Disease

Symptoms will continue to worsen as the tumor grows and starts to spread outside the ovaries. Once it gets to this point, advanced ovarian cancer may be harder to treat effectively.

These following symptoms are indicators of advanced ovarian cancer:

- **Changes in bowel habits.** Women will start to experience constipation, diarrhea and other bowel changes as the cancer starts to spread.
- **Pain.** Ovarian cancer pain, especially in the low back, hips and legs results when tumors put pressure on nerves, bones and muscles. In advanced ovarian cancer, pain is a main symptom and often intense and consistent.
- **Pain during sex.** If you have advanced ovarian cancer, you may notice pain during intercourse. That pain is generally located across the pelvis or on the right or left side of the pelvis.
- **Abdominal swelling with weight gain.** In advanced ovarian cancer, you may notice an obvious change in abdomen size. This is the result of fluid accumulation in the abdomen.

Be Aware of Your Risk Factors

An exact cause of ovarian cancer is not known. However, the risk is higher in women who are post-menopausal, have a family history of ovarian or breast cancer, or have used estrogen replacement therapy.

It is possible to develop ovarian cancer without any risk factors. And having these risk factors doesn't mean you will develop the disease.

If an increased risk factor applies to you, talk to your doctor. You should also see your doctor — whether or not you have a risk factor — if you have signs or symptoms that worry you or seem to last too long.

Take into consideration ovarian cancer isn't common, and it is likely your symptoms are something else. But it is still better to be safe than sorry when it comes to any unusual signs and symptoms, especially those that are indicators of gynecological cancers.