

Ovarian Cancer

Some ovarian cysts may be related to changes that can become cancerous. The risk of ovarian cancer increases with age. Ovarian cancer often has no symptoms in its early stages. Some of the warning signs of ovarian cancer are enlargement or swelling of the abdomen, nausea or heartburn that doesn't go away, loss of appetite, and pelvic pain. These symptoms should be evaluated immediately by your provider.

The ovaries are two small organs that are located in the pelvis one either side of the uterus. Their function is to produce female hormones and to release eggs during women's menstrual cycle.

Ovarian cancer ranks fourth leading cause of death due to cancer. Unfortunately, ovarian cancer is usually silent and may not show any symptoms until the disease is advanced and has spread to other organs such as the uterus, abdomen, or breast.

Ovarian cancer is graded as 1, 2, or 3 (grade 1 has a better prognosis than grade 3) and staged as I, II, III, or IV:

- Stage I. Growth of the cancer is limited to the ovary or ovaries.
 - Stage IA. Growth is limited to one ovary and the tumor is confined inside of the ovary and the capsule is intact. The outer surface of the ovary is cancer free.
 - Stage IB. Growth is limited to both ovaries and the tumor is confined inside of the ovary and the capsule is intact. The outer surface of the ovary is cancer free.
 - Stage IC. The tumor is either stage IA or IB with additional findings such as; tumor is present on the outer surface of one or both ovaries, the capsule has ruptured, and the peritoneal wash is positive.
- Stage II. Growth of the cancer involves one or both ovaries and spreads to pelvic organs
 - Stage IIA. The cancer has extended to the uterus, fallopian tubes, or both.
 - Stage IIB. The cancer has extended to other pelvic organs
 - Stage IIC. The cancer is either stage IIA or IIB with additional findings such as; tumor is present on the outer surface of one or both ovaries, the capsule has ruptured, and the peritoneal washing is positive.
- Stage III. Growth of the cancer involves one or both ovaries and spreads to lymph nodes, small bowel or omentum.
- Stage IV. Growth of cancer involves one or both ovaries and spreads to the cavity which surrounds the lungs.

Diagnosis:

Diagnosis is by routine annual exam. If indicated your doctor will order pelvic ultrasound or a blood test (CA 125). Surgical biopsy of the ovarian tumor will confirm the finding.

Treatment

The treatment of ovarian cancer depends on the type and the stages of the cancer.