



CT WOMEN OF HOPE

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Early Detection is Key!



As we have already shared, the symptoms of Ovarian cancer are most often mistaken for common medical problems and therefore go ignored. These symptoms are generally subtle, and studies have shown that the symptoms are persistent and last longer than two weeks.

These common symptoms have been reported by women diagnosed with Ovarian cancer, however, this not always mean a person has ovarian cancer. If you found that there was persistent frequent symptoms and multiple symptoms affecting you, be sure to see your doctor, or preferably your gynecologist and ask questions. Early detection is key!

There is NO screening for ovarian cancer. A Pap Smear test DOES NOT test for ovarian cancer. If a woman has symptoms of ovarian cancer, it is in her best interest to ask questions and ask her doctor, or gynecologist about a pelvic exam, a transvaginal ultrasound or CT scan and a CA-125 blood test. Your doctor may order additional tests; however, these tests are most effective when done together, in assisting with treatment of disease as well as early detection of disease.

CA-125 Blood Test

There is a protein produced by ovarian cancer cells. When this protein is elevated, it can indicate that a cancerous tumor is present. This substance in the blood is called CA-125 and is used to monitor the treatment for ovarian cancer and detection of ovarian cancer after treatment. It is not reliable for early detection, the CA-125 is not elevated even with the ovarian cancer present, which is why it should not be used as an individual and definitive source of diagnosis.

Pelvic Exam

You may be used to a yearly pelvic exam as part of your regular physical. As part of a pelvic exam, this requires a doctor or gynecologist to place two fingers into a woman's vaginal opening to exam the vaginal walls and vagina, while using the other hand over the abdomen to feel the size, position and shape of the ovaries and uterus. This is not used as an individual and definitive source of diagnosis and rarely detects ovarian cancer, unless in a very advanced stage.

Transvaginal Ultrasound

A transvaginal ultrasound is a test that uses sound waves which are received by a computer and then turns the sound waves into a picture to reveal pictures. The ultrasound is done by inserting a probe into a woman's vagina to examine the reproductive organs, bladder, and ovaries. The test is then able to show irregularities and masses on the reproductive organs. This test is not used as an individual and definitive source of diagnosis.

A Non-profit Organization supporting woman diagnosed with Ovarian Cancer
A Partner of OCRA

Information and research citing: OCRAhope.org www.cdc.gov/cancer/ovarian

Diagnosis

While your doctor may perform several tests and blood tests, the only definitive way to determine if ovarian cancer is present is through surgery and biopsy. Once your doctor or gynecologist has performed the tests to gather enough evidence supporting their suspicion of the disease, it is recommended that the patient seek out a gynecologic oncologist to prepare for preliminary tests.

Common Preliminary Tests

CT scan

CT scans make images of the internal organ by employing x-rays to make multiple cross-sectional images of the tissues and bones in the body. This will help determine the extent of tumor spread, where to operate, and how to monitor the disease. In some cases, a patient will receive a contrast dye to help the tissues and organs stand out more. This contrast dye is sometime given in a drink and sometimes done intravenously.

Biopsy

Surgical biopsy of the tissue or tumor is the only way to confirm ovarian cancer. The above tests alone are not enough to determine if ovarian cancer is present. This may be done laparoscopically which is done through a small thing tube with a camera which allows the doctor to see and remove tissue with minimal invasion.

Surgery

If all the patient's tests have implied that ovarian cancer is likely, the doctor will likely opt for surgery. Depending on the CT scan, a laparotomy or laparoscopy may be performed. A laparotomy is a surgical procedure by which the wall of the abdomen is opened to remove fluid, ovaries, fallopian tubes, uterus and connecting tissues, depending how far the cancer has spread. By examining the flued under a microscope, a pathologist can determine the cancer as a Grade 1,2, or 3.