



## Ovarian Cancer

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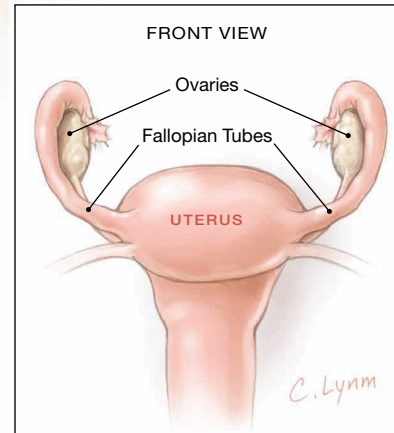
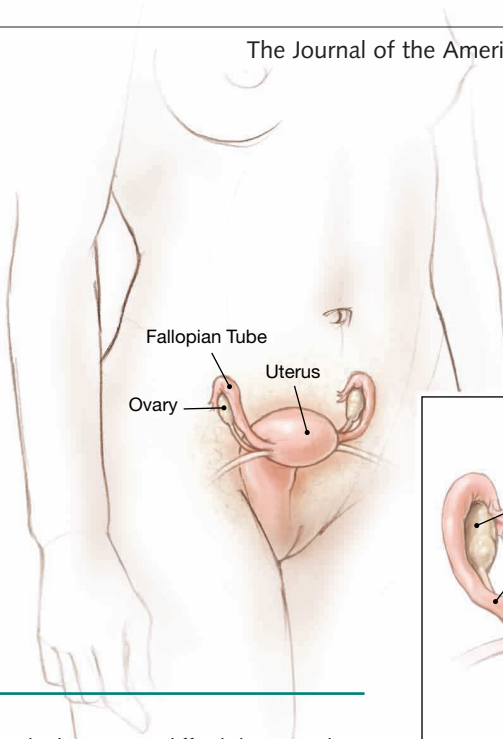
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# Ovarian Cancer

Women have 2 **ovaries**, which are their reproductive organs. The ovaries are each about the size of a large almond and are located on each side of the **uterus**.

**Ovarian cancer** is cancer of the cells in the ovaries and is a serious, hard-to-detect illness that causes the deaths of about 14,000 women every year in the United States. The July 17, 2002, issue of JAMA includes an article about ovarian cancer and use of estrogen replacement therapy.



## SYMPTOMS OF OVARIAN CANCER

There is no proven screening test for ovarian cancer. Early detection is difficult because the symptoms are often vague and can be confused with other disorders. If any of the symptoms below persist for more than 2 or 3 weeks, consult a physician to determine the cause:

- Pelvic or abdominal pain or discomfort
- Swelling or a feeling of fullness in the pelvis or abdomen
- Persistent nausea or indigestion
- Unexplained diarrhea or constipation
- Pain during sexual intercourse
- Abnormal bleeding from the vagina
- Persistent fatigue and backaches

## WHO IS AT RISK FOR OVARIAN CANCER?

Any woman can get ovarian cancer, but the disease occurs more frequently in women who:

- Are older than 50 years
- Have relatives who were diagnosed with ovarian cancer, breast cancer, or colon cancer
- Have mutations in the *BRCA1* or *BRCA2* breast cancer genes
- Have had breast cancer before the age of 50 years
- Have never been pregnant nor used birth control pills

Other possible risk factors include:

- Long-term (more than 10 years) use of estrogen replacement therapy
- Infertility or use of drugs to treat infertility

## TREATMENT OF OVARIAN CANCER

Treatment of ovarian cancer depends on the age of the patient and how long she has had the disease. It is most successful when the disease is treated early. Treatment may include:

- Surgery to remove the cancer from the ovaries and any surrounding tissue; a complete **hysterectomy** (removal of the uterus) and removal of both ovaries and the fallopian tubes may be necessary
- Chemotherapy—use of certain drugs to destroy cancer cells
- Radiation treatment (used only in certain cases)—use of high-energy x-rays to kill cancer cells

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- American Cancer Society  
800/227-2345  
[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)
- National Cancer Institute  
800/422-6237  
[www.nci.nih.gov/cancer\\_information/cancer\\_type/ovarian](http://www.nci.nih.gov/cancer_information/cancer_type/ovarian)
- National Ovarian Cancer Coalition  
888/682-7426  
[www.ovarian.org](http://www.ovarian.org)
- Ovarian Cancer National Alliance  
202/331-1332  
[www.ovariancancer.org](http://www.ovariancancer.org)

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Sources: Mayo Clinic, National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health, National Ovarian Cancer Coalition, Ovarian Cancer National Alliance

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