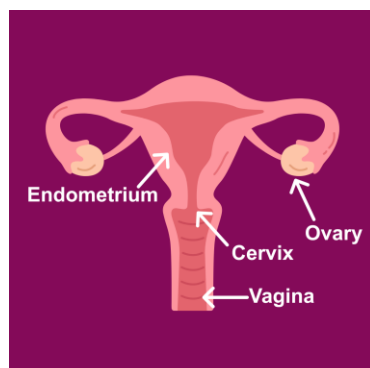


Women's Cancers

Gynaecologic Cancers



Gynaecologic cancers refer to any cancer that starts in the female reproductive system. These cancers can affect women, some transgender men, and non-binary people assigned female at birth. Gynaecologic cancers include cervical cancer, ovarian cancer, uterine cancer such as endometrial cancer, vaginal cancer, and vulval cancer.

Cervical cancer is a type of cancer that occurs in the cervix, which is a structure connecting the lower part of the uterus to the upper part of the vaginal canal. The main risk factor for cervical cancer is Human Papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is a very common sexually transmitted infection which the immune system typically clears on its own. A persistent HPV infection can cause abnormal cells to grow, which can progress to cervical cancer. Cervical cancer is a very treatable cancer if it is found early. Many countries have cervical cancer screening programs for people with a cervix, starting between the ages of 20-25. Check your local guidelines and talk to your healthcare provider to ensure you are up to date with your cervical cancer screening. Also speak to your doctor about the benefits and risks of HPV vaccines to lower your risk for cervical cancer.

Ovarian cancer occurs in one or both of the ovaries, the almond-shaped structures on either side of the uterus. The ovaries contain the eggs and produce certain hormones. **Endometrial cancer** or uterine cancer occurs in the layer of cells that line the uterus. There is no screening test for ovarian cancer or endometrial cancer in people with no symptoms. For people with a uterus who experience abnormal uterine bleeding or any of the other symptoms listed below, your doctor may suggest regular ultrasounds.

Vaginal cancer is a rare form of cancer which starts in the vagina. **Vulvar cancer** occurs on the external surface of the female genitalia and often appears as an itchy lump or sore on the vulva. Similar to cervical cancer, prolonged exposure to HPV can increase your risk of developing vaginal cancer and vulvar cancer. While there are no specific screening tests for these cancers, a routine pelvic exam, performed by your doctor, can help detect vaginal and vulvar cancer early.

Many gynaecologic cancers can occur with no signs or symptoms in the early stages, which makes regular screening (where possible) extremely important. If you notice any of the following symptoms, speak to your health care provider:

- Vaginal bleeding after intercourse, between periods, or after menopause



Women's Cancers

- Pelvic pain, including during intercourse
- Watery or bloody vaginal discharge
- Changes in bowel movements
- Increase in frequency of urination or pain with urination
- A lump or mass in the vagina or vulva
- Changes in appearance of the skin of the female genitalia

Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer among women worldwide. The good news is, 5-year survival rates for breast cancer exceed 90% with early detection and timely diagnosis and treatment. Many countries have breast cancer screening programs to promote early detection. These programs typically start around ages 40-50 and consist of regular mammography, which is an x-ray of the breast. Each region of the world differs slightly with when screening starts and how often testing is done, so be sure to speak to your healthcare provider and check the guidelines for your region to make sure you are up to date with your screenings.

Knowing the signs and symptoms of breast cancer is an important part of early detection, in addition to regular screening. If you notice any of the following, speak to your healthcare provider right away:

- A breast lump or breast tissue thickening
- Change in size, shape, or appearance of the breast
- Dimpling, redness, pitting, or other changes in the skin
- Change in nipple appearance or the skin surrounding the nipple
- Abnormal fluid or bloody discharge from the nipple

For more information on risk factors for developing breast cancer, signs to look out for, and instructions for how to do a self-breast exam, go to <https://www.knowyourlemons.org/>

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