

YOUR HEALTH

Newsletter March 2021



Duradiamond

Building Healthy Business



TOPICS:

OVARIAN CANCER

KEEP MOVING

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Ovarian cancer awareness

Ovarian cancer occurs when cells in the ovaries grow and multiply uncontrollably, producing a lump of tissue called a tumour.

Ovarian cancer, or cancer of the ovaries, is the fifth most common malignancy in females in the UK. Five thousand new cases are diagnosed each year.

Ovarian cancer accounts for a quarter of all genital tract cancer but is responsible for more than half the deaths, primarily due to its late presentation, i.e. symptoms may not show until the cancer has progressed.

Ovarian cancer mainly affects women who have been through the menopause (usually over the age of 50), but it can sometimes affect younger women.

The outcome for women with ovarian cancer is generally poor, with an overall five-year survival rate of less than 35%.

Despite the relatively poor overall survival rates for ovarian cancer, there has been a two-fold increase in survival over the last 30 years. This has coincided with the advent of effective chemotherapy, as well as changes in surgical practice.

Signs and symptoms:

- Persistent abdominal distension (often referred to as 'bloating')
- Feeling full (early satiety) and/or loss of appetite
- Unintentional weight loss
- Pelvic or abdominal pain
- Increased urinary urgency and/or frequency (feeling the urge to pee).

When to see your GP:

- If you have been feeling bloated, particularly more than 12 times a month
- If you have other symptoms of ovarian cancer that will not go away
- If you have a family history of ovarian cancer and are worried that you may be at a higher risk of getting it. Your GP may consider sending you to a genetics specialist
- If you have already seen a GP and your symptoms continue or get worse, go back to them, and explain this.

Diagnosis: Your GP may ask about your symptoms, feel your abdomen, do an internal examination and ask about a history of ovarian or breast cancer in your family.

A blood sample may be taken to test for the tumour marker CA125, which is produced by some ovarian cancer cells.

A raised CA125 does not definitely mean that you have cancer, as it can also be raised by other gynaecological conditions.

Your GP may also arrange for an abdominal and pelvic ultrasound scan. You may be referred to hospital where further specialist tests may be undertaken including a CT scan, X-ray, ovarian biopsy or a laparoscopy (keyhole surgery using a camera to look inside the abdomen).

If you are diagnosed with ovarian cancer, it will be given a "stage" between one to four. This describes the size of the cancer and how far it has spread and allows the doctors to plan the best treatment.

Risk factors include:

- Family history of ovarian cancer: sometimes this may be because you have inherited a faulty version of a gene called BRCA1 or BRCA2. These genes increase your risk of developing both ovarian and breast cancer. The charity Ovarian Cancer Action has a tool to help you check whether your family history puts you at risk of ovarian cancer: <https://ovarian.org.uk/risktool/>



- Increasing age
- Prolonged periods of uninterrupted ovulation, e.g. not having had a child, or the first child after the age of 35 years, late age of menopause
- Being of white race
- HRT: it has been suggested that taking HRT may increase your risk of ovarian cancer but studies looking at this have, so far, had conflicting results. If there is any risk, it is considered small, and it is thought to decrease after you stop taking HRT
- Endometriosis: research has shown that women with endometriosis may be more likely to develop ovarian cancer

- Other factors: obesity and smoking increase your risk. Exposure to asbestos may increase your risk to a specific ovarian cancer, although asbestos is not so frequently used now. Some research suggests that using talcum powder between your legs could increase your risk of ovarian cancer, but the evidence for this is inconsistent and any increase is likely to be very small.

Oral contraceptives are thought to be protective as they suppress ovulation. A history of infection with the mumps virus may also have a protective effect.

Treatment: This depends on how far the cancer has spread, your general health and whether you are still able to have children. Most people have a combination of surgery and chemotherapy.

The aim of treatment is to remove the cancer if possible; however, if it is too advanced to be cured, treatment aims to relieve symptoms and control the cancer for as long as possible.

Patient information: Useful information describing symptoms and signs of ovarian cancer is available at <http://www.ovarian.org.uk/>



Let's keep moving!

Regular physical activity has a positive impact on our general health and wellbeing by helping maintain a healthy weight, enhancing sleep, improving energy and helping us manage stress. It can also reduce the risk of developing certain physical health conditions such as high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and many types of cancer.



It has also been shown to enhance the body's natural immune response. Additionally, evidence shows that physical activity has a positive impact on mental health symptoms and can help improve self esteem and confidence.

How does keeping moving support health and wellbeing?

Clinical studies show that engaging in regular exercise can improve overall body composition as well as facilitate insulin sensitivity and cardiovascular fitness, whilst decreasing blood pressure, visceral (stored in abdominal cavity) fat and cholesterol.

As we age, we naturally lose muscle mass, which could make us more prone to injury and disability. Exercise encourages the body to release hormones that promote the ability of our muscles to absorb nutrients. This helps them grow and reduce muscle breakdown, avoiding muscle loss whilst maintaining strength. The best types of physical activity for muscle health are strengthening and flexibility exercises.

Engaging in regular physical activity can also help improve bone density, resulting in stronger and healthier bones, helping prevent bone loss. The best type of exercise for bone health is a combination of strength training and weight bearing exercise, e.g. walking, running, skipping or sports, which you engage in whilst on your feet.

Physical activity can also help improve symptoms associated with mental health. It increases the release of endorphins, which are known to promote feelings of positivity. Exercise can also increase the brain's sensitivity to the hormones serotonin and norepinephrine, which are known to improve low mood. It appears that all types and intensity of physical activity can have a positive impact on our emotional wellbeing, with some improvements being noticed almost immediately.

Exercise can help us maintain a healthy weight by supporting an increase in our metabolism and helping us burn off calories. Maintaining a healthy weight is widely recognised as reducing the risk of many health problems. The best type of physical activity to control weight is a combination of aerobic exercise and strength training.

Note: women may include CIS women, trans men, some non-binary/intersex people.

Sources: NICE (March 2011). Ovarian cancer The recognition and initial management of ovarian cancer, CRUK. Pancreatic Cancer Statistics (Accessed 29/5/2019)

Regular physical exercise also improves blood circulation and, therefore, oxygen to the brain. It also stimulates production of hormones involved in the growth of brain cells, improving memory and concentration amongst other brain functions.

Regular physical exercise can help improve sleep quality, resulting in improved energy levels during waking hours.

Finally, regular moderate exercise is known to increase the body's production of natural antioxidants, helping to protect cells and improve circulation. Not only does this help improve our general health but it can also improve the health and appearance of our skin! So, if you want that youthful peachy glow...keep moving!

How much exercise should I do?

The Physical Activity Guidelines tell us we should do some form of exercise every day, but how much is enough and what counts?

Guidelines suggest we should aim for 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week (75 minutes if vigorous). Breaking this up into smaller chunks over the week (such as 30 minutes a day Monday to Friday) and varying the type of exercise you do, may help reduce monotony. It therefore becomes more sustainable, whilst making it more manageable to fit into a busy lifestyle.

During moderate intensity exercise, you should notice an increase in your heart rate and you may begin to feel warmer, but you should still be able to hold a conversation.

During vigorous exercise, as well as an increased heart rate, you may also begin to sweat and feel sufficiently out of breath that you would be unable to engage in conversation.

What counts?

Any activity that requires you to move your body can be considered good for you and the more you do, the better!

Ideally, we should engage in some form of strengthening, flexibility and aerobic exercise each week. For example, these could be:

- Strengthening: (i) yoga, pilates or Tai Chi (ii) lifting weights (iii) using resistance bands

- Flexibility: (i) yoga, (ii) pilates (iii) gymnastics (iv) stretching
- Aerobic: (i) brisk walking (ii) running or jogging (iii) cycling (iv) swimming (v) skipping.

As well as the more structured forms of exercise mentioned in the above table, remember, day to day activities also count:

- Any day-to-day tasks requiring you to flex your muscles can count as strengthening exercise. These might include lifting a child, pushing a wheelchair, housework, carrying shopping bags and gardening tasks such as digging
- Any day-to-day tasks that increase your heart rate can count as aerobic exercise. These might include dancing, walking upstairs, mowing the lawn, or a brisk trip around the shops.

So, why not take the stairs instead of the lift, park further away from the shop entrance, get busy in the garden or get your groove on to your favourite tune!



Top tips to help you keep moving

- Bear in mind any local/regional/national lockdown restrictions
- Have fun and enjoy yourself. Choose activities you enjoy: you are more likely to be motivated and engage in physical activity regularly. It shouldn't feel like a chore. Why not turn up the music and dance around your living room or enlist family/friends to a step challenge with a reward for the winner?

- Think about your lifestyle. Consider your budget, the amount of free time you have and your physical abilities. Consider family commitments: is there a meaningful activity that you can engage in with your family members/children such as an outing including a walk or bike ride?
- What's available in your local area? This could include local sports centres, clubs/groups, swimming pools, classes, walking/cycling trails or even your local park. There are also many exercise/workout videos on YouTube
- Buddy up! Support those who also want to keep moving. Buddying up can help maintain focus and motivation. Joining a class (even virtual) can also be a great way to meet people
- Consider the weather. Do you have appropriate clothing for outdoor activity throughout the year? Do you have options for indoor activity on those dark and dreary days? Could you go to your local gym or swimming pool?
- Prepare your home! This time of year is a great time to declutter – why not start with that junk drawer? Empty it out and use it to keep some helpful items all in one 'go to' place? You could use it to house your exercise DVDs, a skipping rope and small handheld weights or ankle weights. If you have a spare room, why not invest in larger equipment such as an exercise bike, yoga mat or fitness ball?
- Don't forget your homework! Remember, all the activities you engage in on a daily/weekly basis count. Doing the housework, walking the dog, gardening: as long as you're moving, you're helping to improve your health and wellbeing.
- Make small changes. Think how you could change your daily routine to increase physical activity, e.g. walk/cycle to the shops or walk instead of driving/using public transport, use the stairs instead of the lift/escalator.
- Listen to your body. Start slowly to avoid the risk of injury; see how you feel and then as able, challenge yourself a little more. Stay well hydrated: water is best as sports drinks often contain high amounts of sugar.

- An app a day keeps the doctor away? For those of us who like to track their progress, why not download one of the many available free fitness apps or simply keep a diary/journal? Seeing the changes in your body shape, fitness levels or mood over time might help motivate you to keep going, especially on those days where you would rather sit on the sofa in front of the TV.

Further information...

Further information regarding how to keep moving in your own way including tips on how to fit this into your daily life:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/get-active-your-way/>



Further information regarding how to stay motivated to keep moving:

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/keeping-active/getting-started/keeping-motivated>



Why not start your day with a good stretch before you even get out of bed? The NHS has produced a five-minute morning workout:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/5-minute-wake-up-workout/>

