

Ovarian Cancer Symptoms Consensus Statement

Historically ovarian cancer was called the “silent killer” because symptoms were not thought to develop until the chance of cure was poor. However, recent studies have shown this term is untrue and that the following symptoms are much more likely to occur in women with ovarian cancer than women in the general population.^{1,2} These symptoms include:

- Bloating
- Pelvic or abdominal pain
- Difficulty eating or feeling full quickly
- Urinary symptoms (urgency or frequency)

Women with ovarian cancer report that symptoms are persistent and represent a change from normal for their bodies. The frequency and/or number of such symptoms are key factors in the diagnosis of ovarian cancer.³ Several studies show that even early stage ovarian cancer can produce these symptoms.^{2,6}

Women who have these symptoms almost daily for more than a few weeks should see their doctor, preferably a gynecologist. Prompt medical evaluation may lead to detection at the earliest possible stage of the disease. Early stage diagnosis is associated with an improved prognosis.

Several other symptoms have been commonly reported by women with ovarian cancer.²⁻⁵ These symptoms include fatigue, indigestion, back pain, pain with intercourse, constipation and menstrual irregularities. However, these other symptoms are not as useful in identifying ovarian cancer because they are also found in equal frequency in women in the general population who do not have ovarian cancer.¹

References

1. Goff BA, Mandel LS, Melancon CH, Muntz HG. Frequency of symptoms of ovarian cancer in women presenting to primary care. *JAMA* 2004;291:2705-12. Level II-2
2. Olson SH, Mignone L, Nakaraseive C,, Caputo TA, Barakat RR, Harlap S. Symptoms of ovarian cancer. *Obstet Gynecol* 2001;98:212-7. Level II-2
3. Goff BA, Mandel L, Muntz HG, Melancon CH. Ovarian carcinoma diagnosis: results of a national ovarian cancer survey. *Cancer* 2000;89:2068-75. Level III
4. Vine MF, Ness RB, Calingaert B, Schildkraut JM, Berchuck A. Types and duration of symptoms prior to diagnosis of invasive or borderline ovarian tumor. *Gynecol Oncol* 2001;83:466-71. Level III
5. Yawn BP, Barrette, BA, Wollan, PC. Ovarian cancer: the neglected diagnosis. *Mayo Clin Proc* 2004;79:1277-1282. Level III
6. Goff BA, Mandel L, Drescher CW, Urban N, Gough S, Schurman K, Patras J, Mahony BS, Anderson M. Development of an ovarian cancer symptom index. *Cancer* 2007;109:221-7. Level II-2

Originating Organizations:

Gynecologic Cancer Foundation
Society of Gynecologic Oncologists
American Cancer Society

Date

January 23, 2007
February 15, 2007
April 30, 2007

Endorsing Organizations:

CancerCare	May 29, 2007
Conversations: The International Newsletter For Those Fighting Ovarian Cancer	May 29, 2007
EyesOnThePrize.org	June 1, 2007
FORCE: Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered	May 29, 2007
Gilda's Club Worldwide	May 29, 2007
Gynecologic Oncology Group	May 29, 2007
In My Sister's Care	June 5, 2007
International Gynecologic Cancer Society	May 30, 2007
Lynne Cohen Foundation for Ovarian Cancer Research	June 4, 2007
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship	June 5, 2007
National Cervical Cancer Coalition	May 30, 2007
National Ovarian Cancer Coalition	May 31, 2007
Ovarian Cancer Canada	June 4, 2007
Ovarian Cancer National Alliance	May 29, 2007
Ovarian Cancer Research Fund	May 29, 2007
SHARE: Self-help for Women with Breast or Ovarian Cancer	June 5, 2007
Society of Gynecologic Nurse Oncologists	May 29, 2007

Additional Endorsing Organizations

Alliance for Women's Cancer Awareness	July 3, 2007
Cancer Awareness Team, Akron, Ohio	July 20, 2007
Marsha Rivkin Center for Ovarian Cancer Research	June 18, 2007
Minnesota Ovarian Cancer Alliance	June 20, 2007
Oasis of Southern California	June 20, 2007
Ovar'Coming Together	June 20, 2007
Ovarian and Breast Cancer Alliance of Washington	June 20, 2007
Ovarian Awareness of Kentucky	June 20, 2007
Ovarian Cancer Alliance of FL	June 22, 2007
Ovarian Cancer Alliance of FL – Gulf Coast	June 21, 2007
Ovarian Cancer Alliance of FL/Space Coast	June 21, 2007
Ovarian Cancer Alliance of Oregon and SW Washington	June 25, 2007
Ovarian Cancer Orange County Alliance	June 28, 2007
R.O.A.R! (Responsible Ovarian Awareness Required)	June 22, 2007
R.O.C.C.S. Research for Ovarian Cancer and Continued Survival	June 20, 2007
Sandy Rollman Ovarian Cancer Foundation, Inc	June 20, 2007

St. Louis Ovarian Cancer Awareness	June 22, 2007
The Chicago Ovarian Cancer Alliance	June 25, 2007
The Ovarian and Gynecologic Cancer Coalition/Rhonda's Club	June 25, 2007
Treasure Coast Ovarian Cancer Alliance	June 24, 2007
Tri-State Ovarian Cancer Alliance	June 20, 2007