

# Common diabetes drug may help treat ovarian cancer

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A new study suggests that the common diabetes medication metformin may be considered for use in the prevention or treatment of ovarian cancer. Published early online in *CANCER*, a peer-reviewed journal of the American Cancer Society, the study found that ovarian cancer patients who took the drug tended to live longer than patients who did not take it.

New treatments are desperately needed for ovarian cancer. Previous research has indicated that metformin, which originates from the French Lilac plant, may have [anticancer properties](#). To look for an effect of the medication in ovarian cancer, Viji Shridhar, PhD, Sanjeev Kumar, MD, both of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN, and their colleagues analyzed information from 61 patients with ovarian cancer who took metformin and 178 patients who did not.

Sixty-seven percent of those who took metformin had not died from ovarian cancer within five years, compared with 47 percent of those who did not take the medication. After accounting for factors such as cancer severity and patients' [body mass index](#), the investigators found that patients taking metformin were 3.7 times more likely to survive throughout the study than those not taking it.

The findings demonstrate only a correlation between metformin intake and better survival, and additional studies are needed to decipher whether the observations made in this study represent a true beneficial effect of metformin in patients with ovarian cancer.

"This study opens the door for using metformin in large-scale randomized trials in ovarian cancer which can ultimately lead to metformin being one option for treatment of patients with the disease," said Dr. Shridhar. Such trials are currently underway in [breast cancer](#). "We think that [ovarian cancer](#) research needs to follow that example," said Dr. Kumar.

**More information:** "Metformin intake associates with better survival in ovarian cancer: A case control study." Sanjeev Kumar, Alexandra Meuter, Prabin Thapa, Carrie Langstraat, Shailendra Giri, Jeremy Chien, Ramandeep Rattan, William Cliby, and Viji Shridhar. *CANCER*; Published Online: December 3, 2012 ([DOI: 10.1002/cncr.27706](#)).

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