

Expertise, preventive care important to stop ovarian cancer

September 10 2014, by Katie Pence

You've heard the saying, "If it isn't broke, don't fix it."

However, in the case of certain cancers, such as ovarian [cancer](#), you might not know it needs to be fixed because you don't know something is wrong.

"The symptoms for ovarian cancer more often come at the later stages, and we really don't have an effective screening protocol for the general population besides genetic carriers of the BRCA mutation," says Thomas Herzog, MD, professor in the division of [gynecologic oncology](#) at the University of Cincinnati (UC), clinical director of the UC Cancer Institute and UC Health [gynecologic oncologist](#). "This is why it is so important to know your risks and to seek the best care possible if you are affected by this type of cancer.

September is Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Month, and Herzog wants you to know the facts about this illness which will kill over 14,000 women this year according to the American Cancer Society.

"Ovarian cancer ranks fifth in cancer deaths among women, accounting for more deaths than any other cancer of the female reproductive system," Herzog says, adding that this cancer mainly develops in older women who are post-menopausal. "There is also a risk in women who have never had children.

"However, [birth control pills](#), taken for five years or more, have been

found to protect against this type of cancer. We recommend continuing with regular pelvic exams even after menopause."

He says that the rate at which [women](#) are diagnosed with ovarian cancer has been slowly falling over the past 20 years but that it's still important to pay attention to symptoms which include abdominal bloating, urinary pain or frequent and irregular vaginal bleeding.

"If diagnosed, it is vital to be seen by a board certified gynecologic oncologist, such as those on the team at the UC Cancer Institute, in order to develop the best treatment plan which will likely include surgery to attempt complete cytoreduction (removal of cancerous cells) or removal of all visible tumors. If you are experiencing continued symptoms, it is important to be evaluated for the possibility of [ovarian cancer](#).

"Overall, it's necessary to stay current with screening and preventive strategies, and to see a doctor when you think there might be a problem."

Provided by University of Cincinnati Academic Health Center

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