

Ovarian cancer can be a silent killer

September 16 2019, by Allison Perry

September is National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. Ovarian cancer is a group of diseases that originates in the ovaries or in the related areas of the fallopian tubes and the peritoneum. This disease is sometimes known as a "silent killer" because many women don't recognize the signs of the disease until it is in an advanced stage.

Symptoms: There are several symptoms of ovarian cancer, but they are often ignored or attributed to less serious issues.

A few recognizable signs of ovarian cancer include pain or pressure in the pelvic area, abdominal or back pain, bloating, feeling full too quickly, or having trouble eating. Frequency or urgent need to urinate can also be a symptom.

If these symptoms don't go away with normal interventions—a change in diet, exercise, laxatives, etc. – they could be a sign of a bigger health problem.

Treatment: Treatment for ovarian cancer usually involves a combination of surgery and chemotherapy. A treatment plan will vary based on a number of individual factors, including the type of ovarian cancer, overall health, personal preferences, and whether the patient plans to have children (if she is still of child-bearing age).

Risk: Women over the age of 50 are at a higher risk for ovarian cancer, or women with a [family history](#) of ovarian or [breast cancer](#). Most cases of ovarian cancer occur in women who have already gone through

menopause, and more than half the cases of ovarian cancer diagnosed are women over 65 years old.

Although cancer is never completely preventable, certain things can reduce ovarian cancer risk, including using [birth control pills](#) for at least five years, having tubal ligation, having both fallopian tubes and ovaries surgically removed, or having a hysterectomy. Additionally, women who have given birth and breastfed for a year or more can also reduce their risk of ovarian cancer.

Screening: Although it is not yet a [standard practice](#), the UK Markey Cancer Center offers free ovarian screenings to women as part of an ongoing, decades-long research study to determine the effectiveness of transvaginal ultrasound in detecting ovarian [cancer](#).

All Kentucky [women](#) over the age of 50 are eligible for a free screening. Women over the age of 25 who have a family history of [ovarian cancer](#) are also eligible. Screenings are available at locations across the state, including Lexington, Somerset, Elizabethtown, Prestonburg, Maysville and Paducah. Call (800) 766-8279 for more information.

Ultimately, it is important to pay attention to your body and to know what feels normal for you. If you notice unusual changes in your body or frequently experience any of the symptoms listed above, contact your doctor immediately.

Provided by University of Kentucky

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