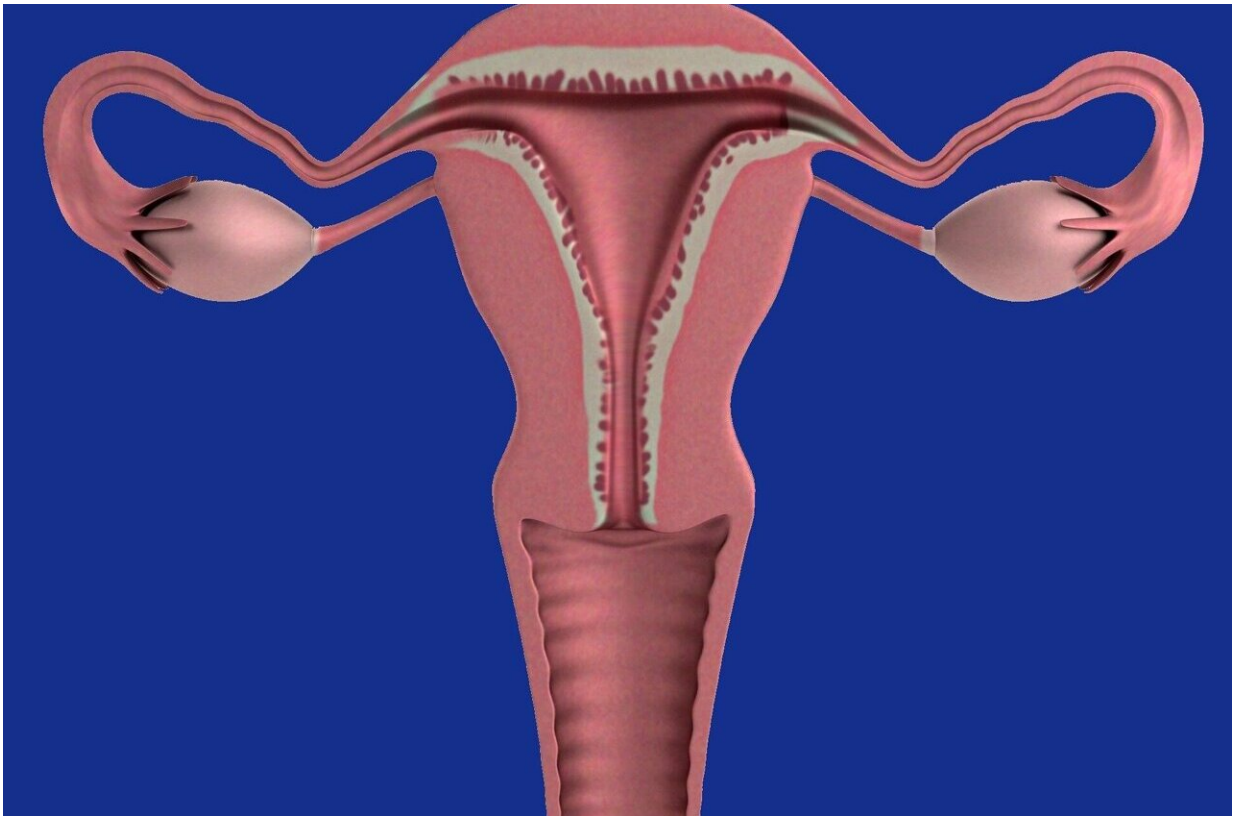


How to reduce your risk of gynecological cancer

September 14 2023, by Chad A. Hamilton



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The American Cancer Society estimates about 115,000 women will be diagnosed with a gynecologic cancer this year. That's one case about every five minutes. These types of malignancies originate in the female

reproductive organs, most commonly the cervix, endometrium or ovaries.

Did you also know that almost half of them are preventable? Prevention is better than a cure.

Cervical cancer facts

Cervical [cancer](#) is most frequently diagnosed between the ages of 35 and 44, but younger and [older women](#) are at risk too. It is the only gynecologic cancer for which there is a preventative anti-cancer vaccine and effective screening tests that identify precancer or cancer early when treatment is likely to work best. We can eradicate [cervical cancer](#) with routine use of the HPV vaccine and Pap or HPV cervical cancer screenings. It is within our grasp to make cervical cancer, like smallpox, a disease of the past.

Vaccinating children before they become sexually active is ideal for preventing cervical pre-cancer and cancer. Routine HPV vaccination is recommended at ages 11 to 12 years for both males and females, and it can be given between the ages 9 to 26.

Regular screening through HPV testing (primary HPV test) or at the same time as the Pap test (co-testing) remain important in preventing cervical cancer.

Many women will have no symptoms. When present, the symptoms of cervical cancer, often overlap with common (benign) gynecologic issues and may include:

- Abnormal bleeding between menstrual cycles
- Abdominal and/or pelvic pain
- Bleeding after sex

- Excessive discharge

Endometrial cancer facts

Endometrial cancer is a disease that affects the lining of the uterus (where your period comes from). It is the most common gynecologic cancer in the United States, and the majority of patients are diagnosed after the age of 50. Many endometrial cancer cases are related to obesity and lack of physical activity. By improving our diet and adding 30 minutes of exercise every day, we could cut the rates of endometrial cancer significantly (and also decrease the rates of postmenopausal breast cancer, [colon cancer](#) and other cancer types as well). Reduce your risk of endometrial cancer by:

- Exercising regularly
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Controlling blood pressure and blood sugar levels

Symptoms of endometrial cancer:

- Postmenopausal bleeding is the most common [symptom](#) of [endometrial cancer](#) and should be promptly evaluated by a gynecologist.

Ovarian and fallopian tube cancer facts

Ovarian and fallopian tube cancers most commonly start on the surface of the ovaries or in the tubes that carry eggs from the ovary to the uterus (womb). Ovarian cancer is rare in women younger than 40 and most develop after menopause. Half of all [ovarian cancers](#) are diagnosed in women 63 years of age or older. Up to 25% of ovarian cancers are a part of family cancer syndromes resulting from inherited changes, called

mutations, in certain genes. We can identify many [women](#) who are at highest risk by having them answer a few simple questions about their personal and family history. Once those individuals are identified, we can prevent [ovarian cancer](#) with risk-reducing surgeries and/or medications.

The most common genetic mutation for hereditary breast and ovarian cancer syndrome is BRCA and can be detected by a blood or saliva sample.

Symptoms of ovarian cancer include:

- Pelvic and/or abdominal pain
- Bloating
- Urgency or frequency to urinate
- Trouble eating or feeling full quickly

These same symptoms occur more commonly for reasons other than cancer. When they are caused by ovarian cancer, they usually represent a significant change, occur more often, and are more severe. Women experiencing these symptoms for more than a few weeks should be evaluated by their health care team.

Provided by Ochsner Health

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