

5 minutes might save your life

HOW TO SPOT OVARIAN CANCER

Heather was diagnosed with
ovarian cancer in 2022



The first step to being able to spot any cancer symptoms is to know your body and **what is normal for you.**

What are the ovaries?

The ovaries are two small organs about the size of grapes which are connected to the womb by the Fallopian tubes. The ovaries are where eggs are stored. Each month (between puberty and menopause) one of these eggs is released into the Fallopian tubes.

The ovaries produce sex hormones, including oestrogen and progesterone, which control your menstrual cycle. After menopause the ovaries stop releasing eggs and produce less oestrogen and progesterone.



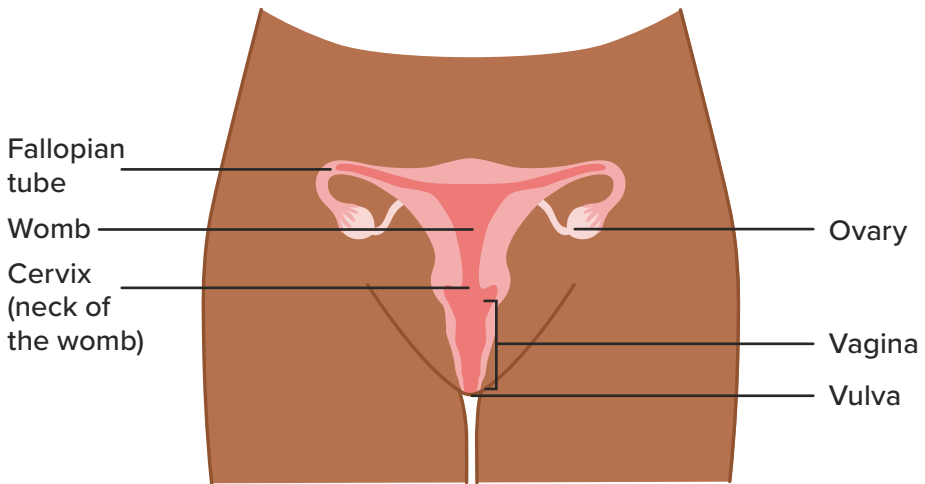
7,750 women
and people with gynae
organs are diagnosed with
ovarian cancer each year.



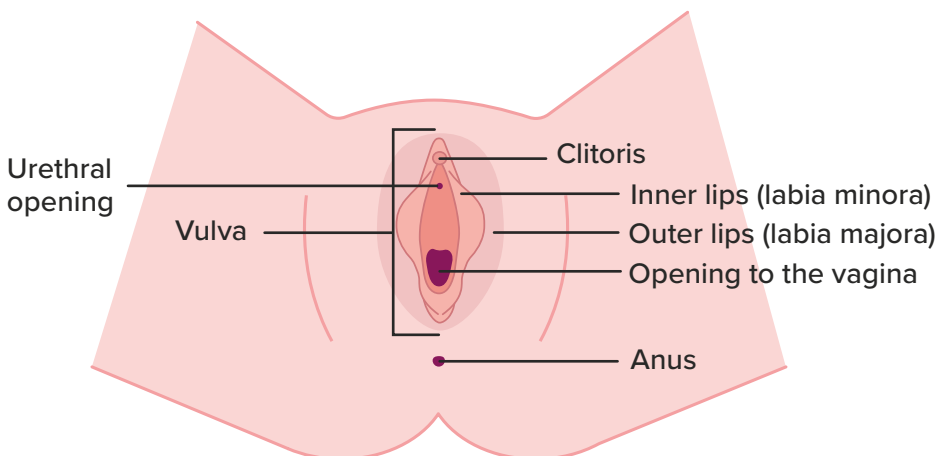
**It is the sixth most
common cancer**
in women in the UK.

The reproductive system

You may or may not have been taught about the gynaecological organs (female reproductive system) at home or at school, but it is never too late to learn about our bodies, and how we can look after our health.



The vulva



Signs and symptoms

The symptoms of ovarian cancer can be vague. They can be similar to other conditions, like Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS). If you have any of the symptoms below, it is important to speak to your GP as soon as possible.

- Unexpected increased abdominal size and persistent bloating (not bloating that comes and goes)
- Feeling full quickly, loss of appetite or feeling sick
- Pelvic and/or abdominal pain
- Needing to wee (urinate) more often
- Changes in bowel habits.

1 in 56 women will be diagnosed with ovarian cancer in their lifetime.

Ovarian cancer starts from cells in the Fallopian tubes or ovaries.

Other less common symptoms include:

- Back pain, losing weight unexpectedly, indigestion, feeling tired, and vaginal bleeding that is different or new can also sometimes be symptoms of ovarian cancer.

Go get checked



If you have any of these symptoms, it is important that you see your GP. It is more likely to be caused by something less serious than cancer, but it is always worth getting them checked, just in case.

Risk factors

The earlier ovarian cancer is caught, the more treatment options there are available and the best possible chance someone will have of successful treatment, so knowing what to look out for and getting any concerning symptoms checked as soon as possible is really important.

Ovarian cancer is commonly misdiagnosed. If you've seen your GP about any of these symptoms but they are persisting, get a follow up appointment.

Family history

There are two inherited gene alterations (mutations) that are linked to an increased risk of developing ovarian cancer: BRCA and Lynch syndrome. If members of your family are known to have one of these inherited risks, or you have a strong family history of breast, ovarian and prostate cancer or womb, bowel and ovarian cancer, speak to your GP.

Ask if you should be referred to a Clinical Geneticist for further advice, or get in touch with Ask Eve (details at the end of this leaflet). People with Jewish ancestry will be eligible for BRCA testing from 2027.

Smoking

Smoking increases the risk of one rarer type of ovarian cancer, it is called mucinous ovarian cancer.

Age

Ovarian cancer can happen to anyone with ovaries at any age but the risk increases with age. 4 in 5 ovarian cancers happens over the age of 50.

Diabetes

Diabetes has been associated with an increased risk of ovarian cancer.

Endometriosis

Endometriosis can lead to a slightly higher risk of developing ovarian cancer.

66 Never ignore these vague symptoms. Ask Eve for accurate information.

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For more information



You can visit our website
for more information

eveappeal.org.uk/ovarian

This leaflet is one of a series on the five gynaecological cancers – womb, ovarian, cervical, vulval and vaginal. If you have any questions or concerns about any symptoms you are having we run a **free** and confidential nurse-led information service, called Ask Eve. You can get in touch on **0808 802 0019** or email nurse@eveappeal.org.uk



@eveappeal

The Eve Appeal is the leading gynaecological cancer charity. To help save lives, we focus on preventing and improving the early diagnosis of womb, ovarian, cervical, vulval and vaginal cancer.

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All information correct at time of publication. Sources available on request.

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