

OVARIAN CANCER SYMPTOMS CONSENSUS STATEMENT

The Gynecologic Cancer Foundation, the Society of Gynecologic Oncologists and the American Cancer Society led the effort to form a consensus statement on ovarian cancer. Their statement follows.

Historically ovarian cancer was called the “silent killer” because symptoms were not thought to develop until the chance of cure was poor. However, recent studies have shown this term is untrue and that the following symptoms are much more likely to occur in women with ovarian cancer than women in the general population.^{1,2} These symptoms include:

- Bloating
- Pelvic or abdominal pain
- Difficulty eating or feeling full quickly
- Urinary symptoms (urgency or frequency)

Women with ovarian cancer report that symptoms are persistent and represent a change from normal for their bodies. The frequency and/or number of such symptoms are key factors in the diagnosis of ovarian cancer.³ Several studies show that even early stage ovarian cancer can produce these symptoms.²⁻⁶

Women who have these symptoms almost daily for more than a few weeks should see their doctor, preferably a gynecologist. Prompt medical evaluation may lead to detection at the earliest possible stage of the disease. Early stage diagnosis is associated with an improved prognosis.

Several other symptoms have been commonly reported by women with ovarian cancer.²⁻⁵ These symptoms include fatigue, indigestion, back pain, pain with intercourse, constipation and menstrual irregularities. However, these other symptoms are not as useful in identifying ovarian cancer because they are also found in equal frequency in women in the general population who do not have ovarian cancer.¹

References

1. Goff BA, Mandel LS, Melancon CH, Muntz HG. Frequency of symptoms of ovarian cancer in women presenting to primary care. *JAMA* 2004;291:2705-12. Level II-2
2. Olson SH, Mignone L, Nakaraseive C, Caputo TA, Barakat RR, Harlap S. Symptoms of ovarian cancer. *Obstet Gynecol* 2001;98:212-7. Level II-2
3. Goff BA, Mandel L, Muntz HG, Melancon CH. Ovarian carcinoma diagnosis: results of a national ovarian cancer survey. *Cancer* 2000;89:2068-75. Level III
4. Vine MF, Ness RB, Calingaert B, Schildkraut JM, Berchuck A. Types and duration of symptoms prior to diagnosis of invasive or borderline ovarian tumor. *Gynecol Oncol* 2001;83:466-71. Level III
5. Yawn BP, Barrette, BA, Wollan, PC. Ovarian cancer: the neglected diagnosis. *Mayo Clin Proc* 2004;79:1277-1282. Level III
6. Goff BA, Mandel L, Drescher CW, Urban N, Gough S, Schurman K, Patras J, Mahony BS, Anderson M. Development of an ovarian cancer symptom index. *Cancer* 2007;109:221-7. Level II-2

Originating Organizations: Date

Gynecologic Cancer Foundation January 23, 2007

Society of Gynecologic Oncologists February 15, 2007

American Cancer Society April 30, 2007

Endorsing Organizations: Date

CancerCare May 29, 2007

Conversations! The International Newsletter For Those Fighting Ovarian Cancer May 29, 2007

EyesOnThePrize.org June 1, 2007
FORCE: Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered May 29, 2007
Gilda's Club Worldwide May 29, 2007
Gynecologic Oncology Group May 29, 2007
In My Sister's Care June 5, 2007
International Gynecologic Cancer Society May 30, 2007
Lynn Cohen Foundation for Ovarian Cancer Research June 4, 2007
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship June 5, 2007
National Cervical Cancer Coalition May 30, 2007
National Ovarian Cancer Coalition May 31, 2007
Ovarian Cancer Canada June 4, 2007
Ovarian Cancer National Alliance May 29, 2007
Ovarian Cancer Research Fund May 29, 2007
SHARE: Self-help for Women with Breast or Ovarian Cancer June 5, 2007
Society of Gynecologic Nurse Oncologists May 29, 2007