

Introduction

The ovaries are a pair of reproductive organs located in the low pelvis. Each ovary is about the size and shape of an almond. They have two main functions: to produce eggs and hormones. When a woman goes through menopause, her ovaries stop releasing eggs and make far lower levels of hormones.

Ovarian tumors

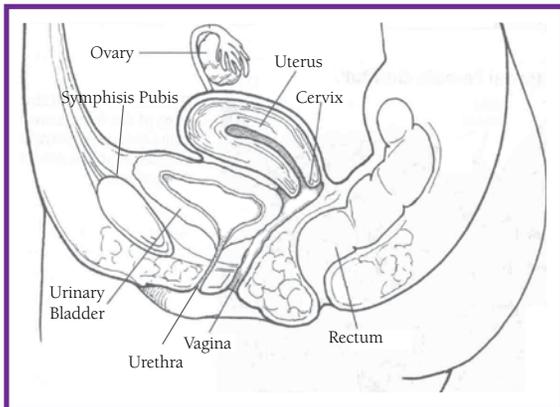
Tumors can be *benign (non-cancerous)* or *malignant (cancerous)*.

Benign tumors are not cancerous, and ...

- Are rarely life-threatening
- Generally can be removed and usually do not grow back
- Do not invade the tissues around them
- Cells generally do not spread to other parts of the body

Malignant tumors are cancerous, and ...

- Are generally more serious than benign tumors. They may be life-threatening
- Often can be removed, but sometimes they grow back
- Can invade and damage nearby tissues and organs
- Can spread to other parts of the body and enter the lymphatic system or bloodstream. They can invade other organs and form new tumors that damage these organs. The spread of cancer is called metastasis.



Gynecologic Oncology Services at Monarch Women's Cancer Center

Our specialized Cancer Center provides examination, evaluation and recommendations for timely, innovative and compassionate care, including surgical intervention and follow-up if indicated.

Stay positive in attitude and know that your healthcare team will work with you to find solutions for your long-term health.

*Strive,
Survive,
Thrive.*



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Understanding Ovarian Cancer



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Understanding Ovarian Cancer

Risk Factors

 Risk factors that may increase the chance of developing ovarian cancer include:

- Family history of cancer including, but not limited, to a mother, daughter, or sister with ovarian, breast, uterine, colon or rectal cancer
- Personal history of cancer including, but not limited to, breast, uterine, colon or rectal cancer
- Age over 55 or post menopausal
- Never pregnant
- Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) – some studies have shown that a slight increased risk of ovarian cancer with estrogen only HRT is possible with a greater than 10 year use

Most women with ovarian cancer do not have ANY known risk factors (except age).



Prevention

 The best defenses against ovarian cancer include the following steps:

- Get regular pelvic exams
- Know and respond quickly to warning signs
- Avoid controllable risk factors

During a pelvic exam the doctor will check the size and shape of female organs. But most ovarian tumors are hard to find early because the ovaries are deep within the body, making it difficult for the doctor to check.

Symptoms

 Early symptoms are sometimes vague and non-specific, but might include:

- Increased gas, bloating, long-term stomach pain or indigestion
- Persistent swelling of abdomen
- Increased pressure and/or pain in the pelvis, abdomen, back or legs
- Loss of appetite with unexpected weight loss or gain
- Shortness of breath



Strive,

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Thrive.

Diagnosis and Staging

 When you visit your physician, you will be asked about your medical history and symptoms and be given a pelvic physical exam. If he or she suspects a problem, you may be given diagnostic tests, such as imaging studies, blood tests, biopsies, and/or a recommendation of surgery.

To plan the best treatment if cancer is found, your doctor will need to determine the extent of the disease. The stage is based on whether the tumor has invaded nearby tissues, whether the cancer has spread, and if so, to what parts of the body.

Treatment

 While the choice of treatment depends largely on the stage of the disease at time of diagnosis, other factors include your general state of health, whether you plan to have children, and other personal considerations. The main types of treatment for ovarian cancers are surgery (to remove any and all tumors) and chemotherapy.

Survival is increased when surgery is performed by a gynecologic oncologist. Many treatments will make a woman unable to bear children. If you want to stay fertile so that you can have a family after recovering from treatment, discuss this with your doctor.