

Victorian Cancer Registry Cancer Facts

Number 2 - September 2013



Uterus cancer in Victoria

Uterus cancers begin from abnormal cells in the body of the uterus (womb) - this includes the lining of the uterus (endometrium) or the muscle tissue (myometrium) but not the cervix. These cancers are commonly referred to as endometrial cancer.

How common is cancer of the uterus?

Cancer of the uterus is the fifth most common cancer diagnosed in Victorian women, with 577 new diagnoses in 2011. This cancer is becoming more common, with rates of diagnosis increasing by 0.6% per year between 1992 and 2011 (Figure 1). The greatest increase has occurred in younger women, with annual increases for women aged less than 50 years being 1.8%, compared with increases of 0.3-0.4% for older women (Figure 2).

Despite increasing incidence in younger women, almost 90% of diagnoses are still made in women aged over 50 years.

There are currently more than 4,000 Victorian women who have been diagnosed with uterus cancer within the last decade, and a further 3,000 who were diagnosed longer ago.

If recent trends continue, the number of Victorian women diagnosed with uterus cancer is expected to increase by 60% to over 900 per year by 2022-26. Annual deaths are projected to increase to 135 per year.

Why is uterus cancer becoming more common?

The increases in uterus cancer are thought to be associated with rising obesity. Women who are overweight, or obese, have an increased risk of uterus cancer. Around a third of uterus cancers in the UK are attributed to excess body weight¹.

What are the outcomes for women with uterus cancer?

While uterus cancer is associated with some deaths - 99 Victorian women died from cancer of the uterus in 2011 - overall, survival is high, and is improving.

From 1986-90 to 2006-10, five-year survival from uterus cancer increased from 77% to 84%. Survival is highest for women younger than 45 years (95%) and decreases with increasing age to 67% for women aged over 75 years.

Whilst survival is very high for this younger group of women, there can be significant consequences of surgical removal of the uterus (and very often ovaries) in terms of early menopause and loss of fertility.

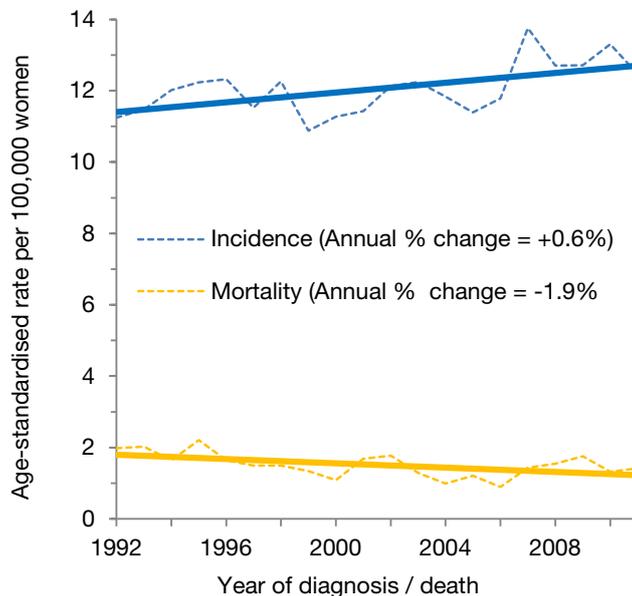


Figure 1: Trends in incidence and mortality for uterus cancer

- Uterus cancer rates have risen substantially in Victoria over the last 20 years, and diagnoses are expected to rise by around 60% in the next 15 years.
- The greatest increases are seen in women younger than 50 years of age.
- The obesity epidemic is thought to be major factor in this increase.

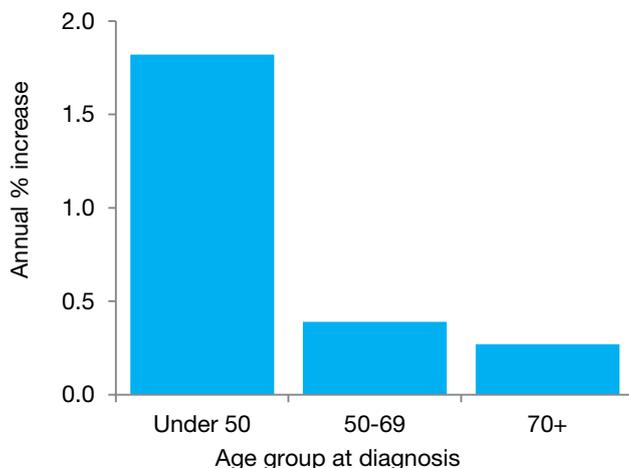


Figure 2: Annual percentage increase in uterus cancer incidence rates by age group, 1992-2011

Cancer stage at diagnosis

The majority of uterus cancers is diagnosed at an early stage (56% are Stage 1) and this early diagnosis occurs more frequently in women aged under 50 years (61%), while only 42% of women aged over 80 years are diagnosed at this early stage.

It is thought that improvements in survival could be related to obese younger women presenting at early stages of the disease, and therefore experiencing more favourable prognoses.

Uterus cancer in migrants

Rates of uterus cancer vary according to a woman's region of birth, as shown in Figure 3. Women born in Other (North and East) Europe, the Middle East and North America had higher rates of this cancer than Australian-born women, and women born in the United Kingdom had lower rates. Migrants from all other regions had comparable rates to those born in Australia.

These differences might be influenced by differences in the prevalence of overweight and in patterns of use of Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT).

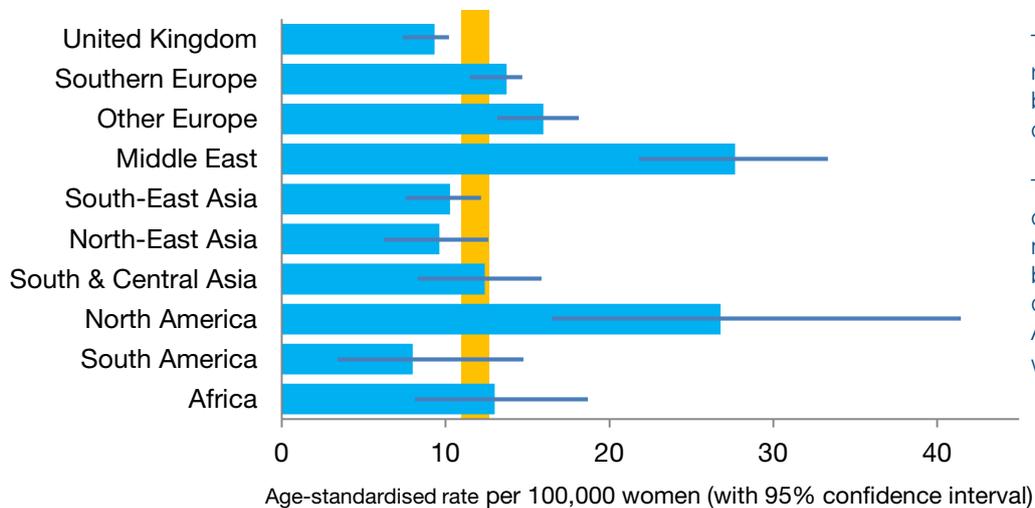
What do we know about its causes?

Factors known to increase the risk of uterus cancer include:

- Overweight or obesity
- Age - more common in women over 60 and in post-menopausal women.
- Diabetes or high blood pressure (hypertension)
- Family history of ovarian, uterine, breast or bowel cancer
- Never having had children
- Endometrial hyperplasia or polycystic ovary syndrome
- Hormone replacement therapy (HRT)
- Using the drug Tamoxifen for the treatment of breast cancer
- Previous pelvic radiation for cancer

References:

1. <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/cancer-info/cancerstats/keyfacts/uterine-cancer-key-facts/>
2. Ferlay J, Shin HR, Bray F, Forman D, Mathers C and Parkin DM. GLOBOCAN 2008 v2.0, Cancer Incidence and Mortality Worldwide: IARC CancerBase No. 10 [Internet]. Lyon, France: International Agency for Research on Cancer; 2010.



The yellow bar shows rate (for Australian-born women, as 95% confidence interval).

Those regions with confidence intervals not overlapping this bar have significantly different rates to Australian-born women.

Figure 3: Uterus cancer incidence by region of birth, 2007-2011.

For more information about Victorian cancer statistics:

www.cancervic.org.au/about-our-research/registry-statistics/statistics-data.

www.cancervic.org.au/about-our-research/registry-statistics/cancer-in-victoria

www.cancervic.org.au/statistics/default.asp?ContainerId=search_cancer_statistics_in_region

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