



What to expect during each stage of treatment and beyond

Ovarian Cancer

This information sheet tells you what you can ask for before, during and after your ovarian cancer treatment. You can ask your team for more information and support.

Working with your team means you can make sure you are getting the treatment, information and support that are right for you.

1. Your doctor visit

Your doctor should do a check up to see if they can find what is making you feel unwell. They will ask you about any symptoms you might be having, for example:

- Bloating or pain in your abdomen or stomach area that won't go away
- Not feeling hungry or wanting to eat
- Not being able to hold your wee in

Your doctor should work with you to make sure you have the information and help you need. You can ask your doctor about:

- What is happening in your body and why it could be happening
- What will or might happen
- How you are feeling and how to stay emotionally healthy
- Who you can talk to about getting the support you need
- Where you can get more information and support

You might have one test or a mix of tests:

Pelvic examination

Your doctor will look at your abdomen and vagina to check for growths or lumps.

Blood tests

The doctor will take a sample of your blood. They will test it to check your body is working well.

Computed tomography scan (CT scan)

Computers and x-rays are used to make a detailed picture of the ovaries.

Transvaginal ultrasound

The doctor uses a small ultrasound tool in your vagina. Sound waves are used to make a picture of your ovaries.

Your test results should be back in one week. Your doctor might send you to get more tests with a specialist. You should see the specialist within two weeks. Your specialist is a doctor that is trained in working with women with ovarian cancer. Your doctor should give the specialist information on your health in the past, if someone else in your family has had cancer and your test results.

You can bring a family member or friend to your visits.

You can ask your doctor for more information and support to make sure you have what you need.

2. Tests

The specialist might do more tests to see if you have ovarian cancer. This is called a diagnosis. If you do have ovarian cancer, the tests will show

how the cancer is growing or if it has spread. This is called staging.

2. Tests cont'd

You can ask the specialist:

- What tests you are going to have
- What will happen in the tests
- What the tests will tell you

You might have one test or a mix of tests:

Magnetic resonance imaging scan (MRI)

A scan where magnetic fields and radio waves are used to make a detailed picture of the body.

Computed tomography (CT) guided biopsy

Computers and x-rays are used to make a detailed picture of the ovaries. This picture is used to help take a biopsy. A biopsy is where a small sample of your ovary is removed to check under the microscope.

Fluid aspiration

Your doctor uses a needle to take fluid or liquid from your ovary. The fluid is checked under a microscope. This is done under local anaesthetic so you cannot feel it.

If you are diagnosed with epithelial ovarian cancer and you are under 70 years your team will connect you to a familial cancer centre for genetic testing. This test can let you know if you have a gene that made you more likely to get ovarian cancer. Knowing this means that you and the other women in your family can make a choice to see if they also have this gene.

You can ask your doctor about finding a cancer peer support group. It can help knowing that there are other women who understand what you are going through. Your friends and family can talk to a support group for carers.

3. Treatment

Your specialist should work with a team. Your team is made up of people that understand ovarian cancer. Your team will review your test results.

They should ask you what you want and need. You should work together to make the best plan for your treatment.

You can ask your team:

- What treatment you are having
- Why you are having that treatment
- What will happen in that treatment
- What the treatment will do
- When the treatment will start and how long it will take
- Risks and benefits of the treatment
- How you might feel during the treatment, side effects and what you can do to feel as well as possible
- What you can expect after the treatment

Your team should talk to you about the option of fertility preservation. Fertility preservation can mean that you are able to have a baby when you

are ready. Your team should give you information about the risk of early menopause and hormonal changes.

Sometimes your treatment can mean that your periods stop. You can ask for more time before deciding on your treatment, or ask for a second opinion.

Your team might connect you to a fertility specialist or genetic counsellor so that you have all of the information you need to make a choice.

Your team might suggest you take part in a clinical trial. A clinical trial is used to test a new treatment, or to see if a treatment works better than another. You can ask for more time, or a second opinion before you decide on your treatment.

Complementary therapies include things like massage, acupuncture and meditation as well as other medicines you might take at the same time as your treatment.

Some therapies might not work well with your treatment. Therefore, it is very important to talk to your team about any complementary therapies you are using, or would like to use.

3. Treatment cont'd

You might have one treatment or a mix of treatments:

Surgery is where the cancer is cut out.

It is the most common treatment for ovarian cancer. Your surgery should be done by a gynaecological oncologist who is very experienced and does a lot of ovarian cancer surgeries.

Radiation therapy or radiotherapy is where radiation is used to stop the cancer growing.

It might be used depending on your ovarian cancer.

Chemotherapy or drug therapy is where drugs are used to stop the cancer growing.

Targeted therapy is where drugs are injected in to the body that attack the cancer cells.

These might be used before or after treatment or if surgery is not a good option.

For more information about treatment and side effects you can ask your doctor or **visit** www.cancer.org.au/about-cancer/treatment

Your team should talk to you about your needs before, during and after your treatment. You can ask for information and support at any time to make sure you have everything you need. Your team can connect you with other services and health professionals to make sure you stay physically and emotionally healthy.

4. After your treatment

You can talk to your team about any changes you have after your treatment. Some treatments will mean your hormones will change. Some treatments might mean you go in to early menopause.

This might mean that you have side effects, for example:

- Night sweats
- Hot flushes or suddenly feeling very hot and then cold
- Not interested in sex

There are a lot of ways to make sure you feel healthy and manage your side effects after your treatment.

After your treatment is finished, your team should give you a treatment summary. Your treatment summary has all of the information on the treatment you received:

- Tests you had to diagnose your ovarian cancer, and the results of these tests
- Treatment you had, and when you had it
- Support services and other treatment plans you received

You and your doctor should get a follow-up plan that includes:

- The follow-up that is best for you
- Plans for managing any side effects of treatment
- How to get help quickly if you think your cancer has come back or got worse

Your doctor should work with you and talk about:

- Finding more information and support to keep physically and emotionally well, and get what you need
- Signs and symptoms to look for that might mean the cancer is coming back
- Prevention and healthy living

Sometimes ovarian cancer can come back after treatment. It is usually found at a follow-up visit, or if you notice any symptoms come back.

It is important to have regular check-ups. If you notice anything different go to your doctor.

You can ask your doctor for a check-up and for information and support.

5. Living with cancer

Side effects

Some people get side effects during and after their treatment. Side effects are your body responding to the treatment you are having. They are normal, but can make you feel unwell. You might have side effects straight away, not at all, or months after your treatment.

You can talk to your doctor about your side effects or **visit** www.cancervic.org.au/about-cancer/survivors/long-term-side-effects

Advance care plan

Your team might work with you to make an advance care plan. An advance care plan is a way of setting out your wishes and making sure everyone knows what you want in future medical care.

You can talk to your doctor about making an advance care plan together or **visit** www.advancecareplanning.org.au

Palliative care

Palliative care is used at different stages of your treatment to help you feel well. Palliative care can help with pain relief, to reduce your symptoms and to improve your quality of life.

You can talk to your doctor about the type

of palliative care that is best for you or **visit** www.palliativecare.org.au

Cost

There are costs at every stage of your cancer including treatment, accommodation and travel. You might have costs if you are having treatment in a private health service even if you have private health insurance.

You can talk to your team and your private health insurer if you have questions about the cost of each treatment you might have. You can also talk to the social worker at your hospital.


You can talk to your doctor about the cost of your treatment or **visit** www.canceraustralia.gov.au/affected-cancer/living-cancer/dealing-practical-aspects-cancer/costs-treatment

You can talk to your doctor about the cost of accommodation and travel or **visit** www.cancercouncil.com.au/get-support/practical-support-services

There are a lot of things to think about when you have ovarian cancer. There is also a lot of information and support. It is important that you do what is right for you. You can work with your team to make sure you have the best care.

Information and support

Cancer Council

- You can talk to a cancer nurse: **13 11 20**
-  If you need an interpreter: **13 14 50**

Ovarian Cancer Australia

- Information and support: **1300 660 334**
- www.ovariancancer.net.au

Carers Australia

- Information and support for carers: **1800 242 636**

For more information visit www.cancerpathways.org.au



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Cancer Australia

