

Ovarian cancer

Gynaecology Oncology Patient Information Leaflet

Introduction

This information is for women who have been diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Hopefully it will answer some of your questions, helping you and the people around you to understand and manage your illness and reduce some of your worries.

You may wish to discuss some aspects with your doctor or specialist nurse. Your specialist nurse is available to help and support you so feel free to ask for more information. The contact details are at the end of this leaflet.

How does cancer of the ovary develop?

About 7,000 women in the UK are diagnosed with ovarian cancer every year (Macmillan, 2015). It usually affects women over the age of 50, though it can occur in younger women. It usually affects women who have reached the menopause (the change).

We do not know the exact cause of ovarian cancer. However, it is slightly more common in women who have not had children. There is evidence to suggest that women who take the contraceptive pill are less likely to develop this sort of cancer.

An inherited gene in the family causes a small number of ovarian cancers. Women who have had breast cancer have an increased chance of developing ovarian cancer. This is because the same faulty gene can cause both types of cancer. If you have several close relatives who have had ovarian, breast or bowel cancer, this could mean there is a faulty gene in your family.

If you are concerned about this, you can talk to your GP about your family history and they can advise if seeing a genetic counsellor or specialist would be helpful. Also Macmillan Cancer Support has useful leaflets and information about this.

What are the symptoms?

Unfortunately, most women with cancer of the ovary have vague symptoms and the disease may be advanced before a diagnosis is made. However, some symptoms may include:

- Loss of appetite
- Mild indigestion, nausea, bloating
- Swelling of the abdomen
- Pain in the lower abdomen
- Vaginal bleeding – although this is rare

How is cancer of the ovary diagnosed?

A full medical history will be taken and a number of other tests may be carried out before a definite diagnosis can be made. This will include a physical examination, including a vaginal examination.

The doctor may arrange an ultrasound scan, a chest X-ray and blood test including for the tumour marker CA125.

- To help confirm a diagnosis, blood tests are used to detect certain substances in your blood, known as markers.
- Ovarian cancer often produces this marker so if it is in your blood, it may indicate you have the condition. However, it can also be in your blood for other reasons that are not related to cancer.

All these investigations will be explained to you and more leaflets are available.

The multidisciplinary team of specialist doctors and nurses meet on a regular basis to discuss each patient's case.

A separate leaflet is available about the multidisciplinary team.

What is the treatment for ovarian cancer?

The treatment that you will have for your cancer will depend on the type and extent of the cancer, as well as your age and other health problems that you may have. Also, very importantly, it will depend on what your wishes and preferences are too.

We will see you in an outpatient clinic to discuss the results of investigations and your treatment. It can be difficult to take all the information in at once so it may be helpful to have family member or friend with you. We encourage you to ask as many questions as you wish and discuss any worries with your doctor or nurse.

As a general rule, treatment options are based around surgery and chemotherapy, either as individual treatments or a combination of treatments. The best option for you will be recommended by your consultant after a discussion with you.

Surgery

This is often a total hysterectomy. This involves removing the womb, the neck of the womb (cervix), both fallopian tubes, both ovaries and also the pad of fat from the abdomen called the omentum. This operation is known medically as a total abdominal hysterectomy, bilateral salpingo-oophorectomy (TAH BSO).

The operation involves a stay in hospital for about one to two days but everybody is different. Everything that is removed as part of the operation is sent to the laboratory for analysis. This is to give the doctors more information. This can then be used to help decide if any further treatment is required.

Surgery may not always be possible in some cases. In such circumstances, each case is assessed on an individual basis and your recommended treatment will be discussed with you.

Surgery may be performed at Russells Hall Hospital or at New Cross Hospital, Wolverhampton. However, your consultant will discuss this with you.

Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy is drug treatment which can be used to destroy or control cancer cells. It is usually given through a drip into a vein but occasionally will be given as tablets. You may be referred to an oncologist who is a consultant who specialises in cancer treatments.

The treatment is given on the Chemotherapy Unit at Russells Hall Hospital as an outpatient. It is usually given once every three weeks for six to eight treatments. The chemotherapy can be given before or after surgery, and your management plan will be discussed with you before treatment begins.

Can I find out more?

You can find out more from your clinical nurse specialist:

Sarah Homer,
Macmillan Gynaecology Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist
01384 244355 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Local support groups

Gynae Cancer Support Group

Meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 2pm at
Cancer Support, The White House, 10 Ednam Rd, Dudley.
01384 231232

www.support4cancer.org.uk

National support

Macmillan Cancer Support

0808 808 2020

Cancer support specialists are available Monday to Friday, 9am to 8pm. Calls are free from all UK landlines and mobiles.

E mails can be sent via the website

www.macmillan.org.uk

Ovacome

0800 008 7054 (Freephone number)

www.ovacome.org.uk

Ovarian Cancer Action

020 8238 7605

www.ovarian.org.uk

Target Ovarian Cancer

020 7923 5470

info@targetovarian.org.uk

www.targetovarian.org.uk

Cancer Research UK

0808 800 4040

You can ring on this Freephone number, 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer

Useful contact numbers

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

New Cross Hospital switchboard number: 01902 307999

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dudleygroup.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/oncology/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email dgft.patient.information@nhs.net

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

للحصول على هذه النشرة بحجم أكبر، وعلى شكل إصدار صوتي و بلغات أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال بالرقم 08000730510.

此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ، ਬੋਲ ਕੇ ਰੀਕਾਰਡ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਸਰੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ, 0800 073 0510 ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜੀ।

Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru vă rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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