

# SEPTEMBER IS OVARIAN CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

## WHAT IS AN OVARY?

The ovary is the reproductive organ, generally two, in a woman's pelvic area. The ovaries are the primary source for the female sex hormone, estrogen.

## WHAT IS OVARIAN CANCER?

Ovarian cancer occurs at the cellular level either on or in the ovaries. Ovarian cancer is sometimes referred to as the "Silent Killer" because the associated signs and symptoms with ovarian cancer may be mild or even non-existent until the disease is in an advanced stage. Staging is the process of identifying how far the cancer has spread; there are four stages with ovarian cancer. Ovarian cancer is the fifth leading cause of cancer death and the seventh most common cancer, other than skin cancer in women. According to the American Cancer Society's 2005 estimates, ovarian cancer will be the seventh leading cause of cancer for women (22,220 new cases) and the fourth leading cause of cancer death (16,210 cases).

The earlier a woman is diagnosed, the better the opportunity for treatment and recovery.



## who is at risk for ovarian cancer?

- Although most cases occur in women aged 50 years or older, the disease can occur in younger women;
- The most common form—epithelial—is usually diagnosed in women aged 40 years or older; and
- Risk for all forms of the disease begins to increase at age 40.

## signs and symptoms

Ovarian Cancer often shows no obvious signs or symptoms until the disease has advanced which may include:

- General abdominal discomfort and/or pain;
- Nausea, diarrhea, constipation or frequent urination;
- Loss of appetite;
- Bloating or feeling of fullness even after a light meal;
- Weight gain or loss with no known reason; and
- Abnormal bleeding from the vagina.

Even though women may have these signs and symptoms, these findings do not indicate symptoms of ovarian cancer.



MAINTAIN AN  
ACTIVE ROLE IN  
YOUR HEALTH.

## Diagnosing Ovarian Cancer

Women must consult a physician who may perform a physical exam and/or order any necessary diagnostic tests. No screening test has yet been shown to reduce the risk of dying of ovarian cancer. Only about 25% of ovarian cancers are diagnosed at an early stage. Women are encouraged to maintain an active role in their health!

### risk factors for ovarian cancer

- Family history: If one or more of her close relatives (mother, daughter, or sister) has had the disease;
- Women with a history of breast, endometrial, or colon cancer also have a greater chance of developing ovarian cancer than women who have not had these cancers;
- Age: The likelihood increases as women get older; and
- Childbearing: Women who have never had children are more likely to develop it than those women who have had children.

### burden of ovarian cancer

- In 2005, an estimated 22,220 new cases will be diagnosed in the U.S.
- In 2005, approximately 16,210 American women will die of the disease.
- In Florida, approximately 1,500 ovarian cancer cases are diagnosed per year.

*Call or visit for more information about Ovarian Cancer:*

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Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion  
850-245-4330, [www.doh.state.fl.us/family/cancer](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/family/cancer)

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [www.CDC.gov](http://www.CDC.gov)

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American Cancer Society, [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

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The National Cancer Institute, 1-800-4-Cancer

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Florida Cancer Data Systems, Florida's Statewide Cancer Registry, <http://fcds.med.miami.edu/>