

Female Reproductive Cancers Fact Sheet

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- ❖ **What is** cancer?
- ❖ **What are** reproductive cancers?
- ❖ What are the **early symptoms** of reproductive cancers?
- ❖ Are there **tests** to screen for reproductive cancers?
- ❖ How are reproductive cancers **treated**?

SOURCES:

National Cancer Institute

- ❖ [Gynecologic cancers](#)
- ❖ [Cervical cancer](#)
- ❖ [What you need to know about uterine cancer](#)
- ❖ [What you need to know about breast cancer](#)

American Cancer Society

- ❖ [Cervical cancer](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- ❖ [Uterine cancer](#)
- ❖ [Ovarian cancer](#)
- ❖ [Vaginal and vulvar cancers](#)

What is cancer?

- ❖ Cancer occurs when cells in the body grow out of control.
- ❖ Cancers are named for the part of the body where they start.



What are reproductive cancers?

- ❖ Reproductive cancers start in the organs related to reproduction (sex). These organs are located in the pelvis. The pelvis is the area in the lower belly between the hip bones.
- ❖ The most common reproductive cancers in women are:
 - Uterine (YOO-teh-rin)—begins in the uterus (womb), the organ where the baby grows when a woman is pregnant.
 - Cervical (SER-vih-kul)—begins in the cervix, the lower end of the uterus that attaches to the vagina.
 - Ovarian (oh-VAYR-ee-un)—begins in the ovaries, the two organs that make and house a woman's eggs.
 - Vaginal (VA-jih-nul)—begins in the vagina, the hollow channel that leads from the uterus to the outside of the body.
 - Vulvar (VUL-var)—begins in the vulva, the area around the opening of the vagina.
- ❖ Breast cancer is sometimes considered a reproductive cancer too. Breast cancer begins in the tissues that make up the breast.



What are the early symptoms of reproductive cancers?

- ❖ Each type of reproductive cancer has different symptoms.
 - Uterine—vaginal bleeding or discharge that is not normal, pressure or pain in the pelvic area.
 - Cervical— vaginal bleeding or discharge that is not normal.
 - Ovarian— vaginal bleeding or discharge that is not normal, pressure or pain in the pelvic area, belly or back, bloating.
 - Vaginal – vaginal bleeding or discharge that is not normal.
 - Vulvar—pressure or pain in the pelvic area, itching, burning, rash, or sores around the opening of the vagina.
 - Breast—a lump in the breast, fluid coming from the nipple, or changes in the skin around the nipple.
- ❖ It's important to see a health care provider if you have any of these symptoms.





Are there tests to screen for reproductive cancers?

- ❖ Many times people with early stages of cancer have no symptoms.
- ❖ A screening test is used to find a disease before the person has any symptoms.
- ❖ There are screening tests for some reproductive cancers.
 - Mammogram—x-ray test used to find breast cancer.
 - Pap smear—lab test of cells taken during pelvic exam to check for cancer.
- ❖ There are no screening tests for the other reproductive cancers. For this reason, it is important to see a health care provider about any symptoms you experience.
- ❖ Finding cancers early increases the chance of success. Regular exams with a health care provider can help find cancers early, even if there are no symptoms.
- ❖ Diagnostic tests are used to find cancers in people who have symptoms.
- ❖ The tests used to find reproductive cancers depend on the type of cancer. These tests include:
 - Lab tests—blood tests that sometimes show signs of cancer.
 - Imaging tests—x-rays and other tests that help doctors “see” inside the body.
 - Ultrasound.
 - X-ray.
 - MRI scan.
 - CT scan.
 - Biopsy—procedure where a health care provider removes small pieces of tissue to check for cancer.



How are reproductive cancers treated?

- ❖ The treatment depends on the type of cancer.
- ❖ Reproductive cancers are often treated with surgery, chemotherapy (medicine to kill cancer cells), hormone therapy (medicine to block hormones that are related to cancer growth), or radiation.
- ❖ One or more of these treatments may be used together.
- ❖ An oncologist (cancer doctor) can help you select the right treatment.

