

Diagnosing Ovarian Cancer - A Quick Guide



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This is a brief summary of the information on 'Diagnosing ovarian cancer' on CancerHelp UK. You will find more detailed information on the website.

In this information there are sections on

- Ovarian cancer tests
- Further tests for ovarian cancer
- Questions for your doctor about diagnosing ovarian cancer

Ovarian cancer tests

You will usually see your family doctor first, who will ask you about your general health and examine you. Your doctor will ask about any symptoms you have had. He or she may take a blood sample to send away for testing. Your doctor may want to examine you internally to see if your womb and ovaries feel abnormal in any way. If there is any cause for concern, your GP may arrange for you to have an ultrasound. Your GP may then refer you to a gynaecologist at your local hospital.

At the hospital

The specialist will ask you about your medical history and symptoms. He or she will then examine you. You may have another internal examination. If your

specialist is concerned that you may have ovarian cancer, you will have some tests arranged. You are likely to have an ultrasound first, if you have not already had one. you may also have a blood test for CA125, a CT scan or an MRI scan. In the full length version of this page, there is information about each of these tests.

Further tests for ovarian cancer

It may not be possible to diagnose ovarian cancer until you have had an operation. If your earlier tests suggest you have ovarian cancer, your specialist may ask you to have further tests before surgery. These are to see how far the cancer has grown, and whether it has spread. The results will help your doctor decide on the best possible treatment for you.

If you have a swollen abdomen from a build up of fluid, your doctor may take a sample of the fluid to check for cancer cells. After a local anaesthetic to numb your skin, the doctor puts a thin needle in to draw off some fluid. This goes to the laboratory for examination under a microscope.

Your doctor may want to look inside your abdomen using a camera on a tube. This is called a laparoscopy and allows the doctor to examine your ovaries and the



surrounding area. You have a short general anaesthetic. Then the doctor passes the tube through a small cut in your abdomen, looks for any signs of cancer and take tissue samples (biopsies) if necessary.

If you feel anxious waiting for test results, it may help to talk to a close friend or relative about how you are feeling. Or you may want to contact a cancer support group to talk to someone who has been through a similar experience.

Questions for your doctor about diagnosing ovarian cancer

- What tests are you going to do?
- What are you looking for?
- Will the tests show whether I have cancer?
- Will you know what treatment I need when you have the results?
- Are any of the tests painful?
- Do any of the tests have after effects?
- Can I have my tests as an out patient?
- Can I bring someone with me when I have the tests?
- How long will the results take?
- Who will give me the test results?

More information

For more information about ovarian cancer, visit our website <http://cancerhelp.cancerresearchuk.org>

You will find a wide range of detailed, up to date information for people affected by cancer, including a clinical trials database that you can search for trials in the UK. You can view or print the information in a larger size if you need to.

For answers to your questions about cancer call our Cancer Information Nurses on **0808 800 4040** 9am till 5pm Monday to Friday

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