

Living with Ovarian Cancer - A Quick Guide



Contents

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

In this information there are sections on

- Coping with ovarian cancer
- Recovering from ovarian cancer surgery
- Living with advanced ovarian cancer
- Questions for your doctor about living with ovarian cancer
- Ovarian cancer organisations

Coping with ovarian cancer

It can be very difficult coping with a diagnosis of cancer both practically and emotionally. You may feel very upset and confused at first.

As well as coping with the fear and anxiety that a diagnosis of cancer brings, you have to work out how to manage practically.

There may be money matters to sort out. Who do you tell you have cancer? There may be children or grandchildren to consider.

The 'coping with cancer' section of CancerHelp UK contains lots of information you may find helpful. There are sections on

- Your feelings
- Talking to people: who and what to tell
- Talking to children
- How you can help yourself
- Who else can help you
- Sex and sexuality
- Coping financially

Recovering from ovarian cancer surgery

It takes time to recover physically and emotionally from cancer surgery. This is particularly true if you have had your womb and ovaries removed. When you go home from hospital, be prepared to take it very easy for the first couple of weeks. You should be able to start driving again anytime from a month after your surgery. But this is very individual. Do talk to your surgeon about your recovery period. And don't feel you should be back to normal if you don't feel like it.

If you have not yet had your menopause and you have both ovaries removed, your treatment will bring on an early menopause. This can cause symptoms such as hot flushes, sweats, dry skin and dry vagina, tiredness, feeling emotional, thinning bones, anxiety and loss of confidence. These menopause symptoms can be quite intense



because your ovaries have been suddenly removed, rather than you going into menopause naturally over a longer period of time. You may be able to take hormone replacement therapy (HRT) to help with some of the symptoms. You can discuss the pros and cons with your surgeon or cancer specialist.

After a hysterectomy, you will no longer be able to become pregnant. And you won't have any more periods. Even if you were past your menopause before the surgery, losing your womb can be a very emotional experience. Many women find this more of a shock than they expected.

There is more about how cancer treatment can affect your sexuality and your sex life in the 'sex and cancer' section of CancerHelp UK.

Living with advanced ovarian cancer

Finding out that you have an advanced cancer when you are diagnosed, or that your cancer has come back, can be devastating. At first, you are likely to experience some powerful emotions.

If you have advanced ovarian cancer it may not be possible to cure it. Advanced ovarian cancer means the cancer has spread from where it started in the ovary or has come back some time after you were first treated. Even if your cancer can't be cured, there are treatments available that can slow your cancer down and help control your symptoms. It may be possible to shrink it and put it into remission for quite a while.

It is important that you feel as well as you possibly can. If you haven't already been referred, ask your hospital doctor or GP

about seeing a symptom control (or palliative care) nurse. They can help control your cancer symptoms and improve the quality of your life physically. Many have counselling training and can help you work through some of the emotions you are experiencing.

If you are having difficulties coping at home, your palliative care nurse or a district nurse can talk to you about ways you may cope more easily.

Questions for your doctor about living with ovarian cancer

- How long will it take to get back to normal after my surgery?
- How will my cancer treatment affect my day to day life?
- When can I go back to work?
- Can I take up my usual sports, hobbies and activities again?
- How will my surgery affect my sex life?
- Will I have menopausal symptoms after my surgery?
- How long will they go on?
- What is your view on my taking HRT?
- How can I deal with menopausal symptoms if I don't take HRT?
- Where can I get help dealing with my feelings?
- Do I have to pay for counselling?
- What practical help is available?
- Can I get help with money?
- Can anyone help me with claiming benefits?

Ovarian cancer organisations

Cancer Research UK

Main website: www.cancerresearchuk.org

Patient information website:

<http://cancerhelp.cancerresearchuk.org>



Cancer Information Nurses phone: 0808
800 40 40

Gynae C
Phone: 01793 491 116
Email: info@gynaec.co.uk
Website: www.gynaec.co.uk

Ovacome
Tel: 0845 371 0554
E-mail: support@ovacome.org.uk
Website: www.ovacome.org.uk

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 cancer 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

Adapted from Cancer Research UK's Patient Information Website CancerHelp UK in January 2011. CancerHelp UK is not designed to provide medical advice or professional services and is intended to be for educational use only. The information provided through CancerHelp UK and our nurse team is not a substitute for professional care and should not be used for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease. If you have, or suspect you may have, a health problem you should consult your doctor. © Cancer Research UK 2011. Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1089464) and in Scotland (SC041666).