

# Detecting ovarian cancer

Ovarian cancer is the fifth most common type of cancer in women. Each year, more than 25,000 women are diagnosed in America and about 16,000 will die of the disease in 2005.

The fatality rate in ovarian cancer cases is high because the symptoms of the disease mirror those of other relatively minor conditions such as digestive disorders, and often ovarian cancer isn't detected until it has spread into tissues and organs beyond the ovaries. Therefore, early detection is important in fighting the disease to prolong women's lives.

Ovaries play an important role in the reproductive system of women. The two almond-sized ovaries, located on each side of the uterus, are responsible for producing eggs as well as the female sex hormones estrogen and progesterone. Ovarian cancer develops when cancerous cells grow and produce tumors in one or both ova-

ries. However, the cause of the cancerous growth is unknown.

Several risk factors have been identified in connection with ovarian cancer. The most significant risk factor is having an inherited genetic

mutation in one of two genes called breast cancer gene 1 (BRCA 1) and breast cancer gene 2 (BRCA 2). These mutated genes were originally identified in families with multiple breast cancer cases. However, studies have shown they are also responsible for about five to 10 percent of ovarian cancer cases.

Family history is another risk. If an individual have any immediate relatives (mother, daughter or sister) with ovarian cancer, the risk of developing the disease is five percent during the course of the woman's lifetime. Contacting a physician is strongly recommended if you have a family history of the disease.

Age is also a risk factor, as the disease is more common

in post-menopausal women. The risk of ovarian cancer also increases with age through a woman's late 70's.

Infertility has also been linked to ovarian cancer. Studies have shown that women who have had problems conceiving may be at an increased risk. Other minor risk factors do exist and you should consult with a physician to learn more about them.

Most symptoms of ovarian cancer are similar to less serious conditions. However, recent studies indicate that a few symptoms are more likely to appear in women with ovarian cancer than other conditions. These symptoms include:

- Abdominal pressure, fullness, swelling or bloating;
  - Consistent urge to urinate and
  - Pelvic discomfort or pain.
- Additional common symptoms that are not exclusive to ovarian cancer cases, include:
- Consistent nausea or indigestion;
  - Unexplained changes in bowel habits;
  - Loss of appetite;
  - Unexplained weight loss or gain;
  - A continual lack of energy;
  - Lower back pain and



KATHY MITCHELL  
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## Teal Toes event tonight

September is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. You can learn more about this "silent" killer at the September Healthy Woman event, "Teal Toes," to be held tonight at 5:30 p.m. in the fourth floor activity rooms at Scenic Mountain Medical Center. Carylon Frerich, PA-C, will be the featured speaker and guests are invited to participate by having their toenails painted teal, the ovarian cancer awareness color, by a nail artist at the event.

This event, made possible with the generous support of Caring Hearts Home Health, is open to women of all ages and refreshments will be provided. While there is no charge to attend, seating is limited to 50 guests so reservations are a must.

For more details or to RSVP, log on to [www.smmccares.com](http://www.smmccares.com) or call Kim Howell at 268-4842 or Anita Cline 268-4721.

# Healthy Woman

Pain during intercourse.  
If you have experienced several of the risk factors and symptoms listed, or want to learn more about the disease, talk with your primary care physician or gynecologist.

*A graduate of Texas Tech's*

*Health Sciences Center, Carylon Frerich, a certified physician assistant, uses her considerable talents with both the SMMC Surgical department and with the OB/Gyn clinic at Family Medical Center. Call 264-7180 to schedule an appointment with Carylon today.*