

About the Symptom Diary

What is the Symptom Diary?

Ovarian Cancer Australia's Symptom Diary is a tool that allows women to easily record symptoms that may be associated with ovarian cancer and more common and less serious conditions.

After recording their symptoms, women can use the Symptom Diary to clearly communicate with their doctor about symptoms they are experiencing.

Symptoms of ovarian cancer

There is no early detection test for ovarian cancer, so all women need to be aware of the symptoms. The Pap smear doesn't detect ovarian cancer; it detects cervical cancer.

The most commonly reported symptoms for ovarian cancer are:

- Abdominal or pelvic (lower tummy) pain
- Increased abdominal size or persistent abdominal bloating
- Needing to urinate often or urgently
- Feeling full after eating a small amount

Additional symptoms

- Changes in bowel habits
- Bleeding after menopause or in-between periods
- Unexplained weight gain or loss
- Lower back pain
- Indigestion or nausea
- Excessive fatigue
- Pain during sex or bleeding after sex

When should I use the Symptom Diary?

- If you are experiencing mild symptoms and would like a clearer picture of the frequency and severity of your symptoms.
- If you have unexplained, persistent symptoms and want to clearly communicate with your doctor about these symptoms.
- If you have already seen your doctor about these symptoms, but you are still experiencing them and believe further investigation is required. In this situation the Symptom Diary might help you build a clearer picture of your symptoms.

What if I have the symptoms?

If any of these symptoms are new for you, and you experience them on most days over 2-4 weeks, make an appointment to see your doctor.

If symptoms are severe, see your doctor without delay.

After ruling out more common causes of your symptoms, your doctor should consider the possibility of ovarian cancer. They may perform a pelvic examination and arrange for the following:

- Transvaginal (internal) ultrasound
- CA125 blood test

Neither of these tests can be used to screen for ovarian cancer, but they may indicate if ovarian cancer is a possibility.

If your doctor suspects ovarian cancer is a possibility, they should refer you to a gynaecological oncologist working within a multi-disciplinary team.

Ovarian cancer is a relatively uncommon disease - most women with symptoms will not have ovarian cancer.

Top tips for communicating with your doctor

1. Make a list of your concerns before your appointment.
2. Use your symptoms report to describe your symptoms in as much detail as you can.
3. Tell your doctor if anyone on either side of your family has had breast, ovarian or bowel cancer.
4. If you have many things to discuss, book a double appointment.
5. If you are not satisfied with your doctor's explanation for your symptoms, seek a second opinion.

Call 1300 660 334 Email support@ovariancancer.net.au
www.ovariancancer.net.au

Adapted with permission from Ovarian Cancer Action UK

References: Goff BA, Mandel LS, Drescher CW, Urban N, Gough S, Schurman KM, Patar J, Mahony BS, Andersen M. 'Development of an Ovarian Cancer Index: Possibilities for Earlier Detection' *CANCER*; 2007 Jan 15;109(2):221-7. Lataifeh I, Marsden DE, Robertson G, Gebiski V, Hacker NF. 'Presenting symptoms of epithelialovarian cancer'. *Aust NZ J Obstet Gynecol*. 2005; 45:211-214.

Symptom Diary

Using the Symptom Diary

The diary allows you to track the four symptoms most commonly associated with ovarian cancer every day for 4 weeks. Tick each day when you have the symptom: so if you had abdominal pain on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday in the first week, you would tick 'Pelvic/abdominal pain' for those days.

After you have monitored your symptoms for four weeks you can also rate how mild or severe each symptom is by scoring it between 1 and 10 (10 is severe).

If you have a severe symptom (9-10), see your doctor to get your symptom checked.

	Week one	Week two	Week three	Week four	Rate symptoms
Pelvic/abdominal pain	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	How would you rate your symptoms? (1 is mild and 10 severe) Rate <input type="text"/>
	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Friday <input type="checkbox"/>	Friday <input type="checkbox"/>	Friday <input type="checkbox"/>	Friday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	
Increased abdomen size/bloating	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	How would you rate your symptoms? (1 is mild and 10 severe) Rate <input type="text"/>
	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Friday <input type="checkbox"/>	Friday <input type="checkbox"/>	Friday <input type="checkbox"/>	Friday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	
Urinary frequency/urgency	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	How would you rate your symptoms? (1 is mild and 10 severe) Rate <input type="text"/>
	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Friday <input type="checkbox"/>	Friday <input type="checkbox"/>	Friday <input type="checkbox"/>	Friday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	
Feeling full after eating a small amount	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	How would you rate your symptoms? (1 is mild and 10 severe) Rate <input type="text"/>
	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Friday <input type="checkbox"/>	Friday <input type="checkbox"/>	Friday <input type="checkbox"/>	Friday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	

Additional symptoms & notes

Some women experience symptoms additional to, or different from, the four key symptoms above. Tick the box next to any of the other symptoms listed below if you have experienced them in the last 4 weeks and note how frequent or severe they are.

Symptom

How often?

How severe?

Changes in your bowel habits

Unexplained weight gain or loss

Bleeding after menopause or in-between periods

If you experience this symptom once, see your doctor to get the symptom checked.

Back pain

Indigestion or nausea

Excessive fatigue

Pain during sex or bleeding after sex

If you experience this symptom, see your doctor to get the symptom checked.