

OVARIAN CANCER FACTS 2019

1. Did you know that ovarian cancer has the lowest survival rate of any women's cancer and has a five-year survival rate well below the average for all cancers?
2. In Australia, the overall five-year survival rate for women diagnosed with ovarian cancer is 45 per cent. In comparison, the overall five-year survival rate for women diagnosed with breast cancer is 90 per cent.
3. In 2019, approximately 1,600 Australian women are expected to be diagnosed with ovarian cancer, and it is estimated that more than 1,000 will die from the disease – that's one woman every eight hours!
4. Each day in Australia, four women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer and three will die from the disease.
5. If diagnosed in its early stages, women have an 80% chance of being alive and well after five years. Unfortunately, 75 per cent of women are diagnosed at an advanced stage, when the cancer has spread and it is difficult to treat successfully.
6. There is no early detection test for ovarian cancer so the best way of detecting the disease is to know and recognise the symptoms which most commonly include: abdominal or pelvic pain, increased abdominal size or persistent abdominal bloating, the need to urinate often or urgently, or feeling full after eating a small amount. If these symptoms are new, unusual and persistent for women they should consult their GP.
7. Research undertaken by Ovarian Cancer Australia in 2018 revealed that nearly one in three Australians don't know the difference between ovarian cancer and cervical cancer, more than 70 per cent of Australians don't know or incorrectly believe that the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) Vaccine protects against ovarian cancer and more than 50 per cent of Australians still incorrectly believe that a cervical screening can detect ovarian cancer.
8. Genetics and family history are responsible for up to 17 per cent of incidences of ovarian cancer. If a woman has two or more relatives from the same side of the family affected by ovarian or breast cancer, her risk of developing the disease may be increased. This tends to be a result of an inherited faulty gene (BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene mutation) that increases a woman's risk of developing both ovarian and breast cancers.
9. A woman is considered to have a family history of ovarian cancer if:
 - She has a first degree relative diagnosed with breast cancer at an age younger than 50 years;
 - She has a first degree relative diagnosed with ovarian cancer at any age;
 - She has a combination of two or more first degree relatives with breast or ovarian cancer; or
 - She has a male first degree relative diagnosed with breast cancer at any age.
10. The BRCA1 and BRCA 2 gene mutations can increase a woman's risk of developing ovarian cancer from a few per cent in the general Australian population to 59per cent for BRCA1 and 17per cent for BRCA2. The mutations are also linked to the occurrence of breast, prostate, pancreatic cancers and haematological malignancies. Although the risk of breast and ovarian cancer in BRCA carriers is high,

they are largely preventable by the uptake of risk reducing strategies. Thus being aware of the presence of a mutation is very important.

11. These faulty BRCA gene mutations can be inherited from either the mother or father's side, with a 50 per cent chance that an individual with a BRCA mutation passes this on to each of their children.
12. Currently, there are approximately 25,000 known patients harbouring a pathogenic BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutation in Australia
13. Ovarian cancer most commonly affects women aged over 50 who have been through menopause; however the disease can affect females of all ages.
14. We don't know the cause of ovarian cancer. We do know that there are some factors that may increase a woman's risk of developing ovarian cancer. Risk factors women should be aware of include:
 - being over 50 years of age;
 - never having children, being unable to have children, or having children after 30;
 - never having used oral contraceptives;
 - having endometriosis; and
 - lifestyle factors: such as smoking tobacco and being overweight
15. Latest research shows that ovarian cancer is not just one disease but a collection of diseases with different characteristics, behaviours and molecular structures.
16. Family history is not the only indicator for the presence of a BRCA mutation. Large ovarian cancer studies estimate that around 50 per cent of patients who have a cancer-causing mutation have no reported significant family history of breast or ovarian cancer.
17. There has been no significant change in treatment options for women who are diagnosed with ovarian cancer since the 1970s – that's nearly 50 years! Treatment can involve chemotherapy and/or surgical removal of the ovaries and fallopian tubes as well as the uterus and cervix.
18. Ovarian Cancer Australia is the only ovarian cancer organisation that provides direct support services for women and their families living with ovarian cancer in Australia.
19. Government funding for ovarian cancer has halved in comparison to 10 years ago.

For more information, please contact:

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About Ovarian Cancer Australia:

Ovarian Cancer Australia is the independent national organisation that takes action for people affected by ovarian cancer and was founded in 2001 by a group of people who had been affected by ovarian cancer, either themselves or through a loved one. Ovarian Cancer Australia provides support for women and their families, raises community awareness of ovarian cancer, advocates for improved services for women and promotes and funds high impact research. Ovarian Cancer Australia's vision is to save lives and ensure that no woman with ovarian cancer walks alone. Ovarian Cancer Australia is a member of the World Ovarian Cancer Coalition, which works to raise awareness of ovarian cancer on a global scale.