Cancer of the Ovary
Information Leaflet

This leaflet has been written to help you understand about cancer of the Ovary, its diagnosis, treatment and support available. You may wish to discuss some aspects with your doctor or Clinical Nurse Specialist.

What is Cancer?

The organs of the body are made up of cells. Cancer is a disease of these cells. The cells normally divide in an orderly manner. Sometimes the cells divide out of control - developing into a lump/tumour. A tumour which is malignant consists of cancer cells which have the ability to spread beyond the original site, destroying surrounding tissue. Sometimes they can break away and spread to other parts of the body.

The Ovaries

The ovaries are two small oval shaped organs in the female pelvis. They form part of the female reproductive system. Each month, in women of childbearing age, an egg is released from the ovary and travels to the womb. If the egg is not fertilised by sperm it passes out of the womb and the lining of the womb sheds - this is a period.

The ovaries also produce the female hormones, oestrogen and progesterone. In the menopause these hormones decrease and periods gradually stop.

How Does Cancer Of The Ovary Develop?

There are approximately 7378 new cases per year in the UK. (Cancer Research 2014)

We may not know the exact cause of your cancer. However, it is more common in women who have not had children. There is evidence to suggest that women who take the contraceptive pill are less likely to develop this sort of cancer. An inherited gene in the family causes a small percentage of ovarian cancers. It may be necessary to obtain a profile of your family to decide if a genetic referral is appropriate. Please ask your Clinical Nurse Specialist if you are concerned about this.
What Are The Signs & Symptoms?

Unfortunately, most women with cancer of the ovary have vague symptoms only and the disease may be advanced before diagnosis is made. Some symptoms may include:

- Loss of appetite and or feeling full quickly
- Vague indigestion, nausea, bloating
- Swelling of the abdomen
- Pain in the lower abdomen
- Vaginal bleeding - although this is rare.
- Persistent bloating
- Unexplained weight loss
- Extreme fatigue

(Targetovariancancer.org.2017)

These symptoms may also be due to other conditions - you should seek a medical opinion.

Diagnosing Cancer of the Ovary

A full medical history will be undertaken and a number of other tests may be carried out before a definite diagnosis can be made. This may include: vaginal examination. Sometimes, the doctor may wish to examine your back passage.

The doctor may arrange a chest x-ray, blood test, including a tumour marker CA125 and a CT scan. All these investigations will be explained to you. (See hospital information leaflets).

Stages of Cancer

Staging is a process of investigations which may be used to determine type/size of the tumour and if there is any spread. Staging is important to help decide treatment options.

Stages of Cancer of the Ovary

The following stages are used for cancer of the ovary.

**Stage 1** - Cancer is limited to the ovary.

**Stage 2** - Cancer cells have spread to the pelvis.

**Stage 3** - Cancer cells have spread outside the ovaries, and spread outside the pelvis.

**Stage 4** - Cancer cells have spread beyond the pelvis to other parts of the body including the liver or lungs.

**Recurrent Disease** - Recurrent disease means the cancer has come back (recurred) after it has been treated.

Treatment Options

There are two main treatment options for cancer of the ovary;

- Surgery
- Chemotherapy

The best option for you will be decided by your consultant following discussion with you.
Clinical Trials

Researching new methods of treating cancer of the ovary are developing all the time. You may be asked to consider taking part in a clinical trial.

Clinical trials are research studies involving patients which compare a different type of medical care with the best treatment currently available. You may be approached regarding a clinical trial which your consultant or specialist nurse will be able to discuss with you.

Macmillan Cancer Support, produce a booklet which may be helpful to you. The type of treatment will be decided by the consultant in discussion with you.

Surgery

Surgical treatment involves the removal of the uterus (womb), ovaries, cervix and the fallopian tubes: also removed will be a curtain of fat from the abdomen called the omentum. During the surgery the surgeon will examine the lymph nodes in the pelvis and will remove any that feel abnormal. This is called a Laparotomy - Total Abdominal Hysterectomy Bilateral Salpingo Oophorectomy, (TAH + BSO) and Infa-colic Omentectomy. To ensure the surgeon can operate effectively you will need to have a mid-line incision. (See hospital information leaflets).

Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy means drug treatment. In ovarian cancer it can be used to destroy or control cancer cells. The treatment is given in specialist units or a cancer centre and your nurse specialist will tell you where your treatment will be. The chemotherapy can be given before or after surgery and your management plan will be discussed with you before treatment begins. Chemotherapy may in some cases be given in a tablet form. (See Clatterbridge Cancer Centre (CCC) booklet & specific information sheets).

Life and Relationships

- Most people feel overwhelmed when they are told they have cancer.
- Many different emotions arise which can cause confusion.
- Reactions differ from one person to another.
- There is no right or wrong way to feel.
- You may experience the whole range of personal emotions and reactions both- similar or different from family and friends.
- Support and guidance is available in coping with these feelings.
- Many people find great comfort in their faith and/or religious and spiritual beliefs.

Following the diagnosis of cancer and your subsequent treatment, you may experience physical changes. There may be some issues/concerns you wish to raise/explore, i.e.

- Body Image
- Weight Gain/loss
- Sexual Health
- Menopause Symptoms
- Others
Your Clinical Nurse Specialist will be able to support you by explaining about the issue/concern and provide advice and information if required. This may help you adjust/cope with these changes. This may include involvement of other members of the Health Care Team (HCT) i.e.

- Dietician
- Lymphoedema Practitioner
- Genetist
- Physiotherapist
- Occupational Therapist via your GP and your Primary Health Care Team (PHCT), General Practitioner (GP), District Nurse (DN).

You may not be aware of who can help with changes in social and financial matters, but your Clinical Nurse Specialist can put you in touch with the relevant people who can provide guidance and advice in these and other aspects, including childcare, how to tell the children and practical day to day issues. i.e. Macmillan/Welfare Benefits advice.

You may wish to explore information and coping methods to help yourself. Therefore, the following booklets may be helpful, (there are many others) from Macmillan Cancer Support.

- Adjusting to life after cancer
- Close relationships & cancer
- Life with cancer
- Sexuality & Cancer
- Body image and sexuality

**Complementary Pensions**

Complementary therapies may be helpful to you and your family. There are many different types i.e.

- Reflexology
- Massage
- Relaxation

Plus many others. Your Clinical Nurse Specialist can advise you by providing information regarding the appropriateness for you and how to access them.

**Your Follow up Care**

This will be tailored to your specific needs. Your Clinical Nurse Specialist will also be able to offer you and your family advice, information and support, regarding your cancer, subsequent treatment and associated health issues.

**Equal Opportunities**

The hospital is committed to promoting an environment which provides equal opportunities for all patients, visitors and staff. If you have special requirements such as dietary needs, interpreter services, disability needs or a preference for a female doctor, please do not hesitate to discuss this with a member of staff who will try to help you.
Support Networks Available Locally

Further information, advice and support is available for you/partner family from:

**Knowsley**
Lyndale Cancer Support Centre
Tel: 0151 489 3538

**Sefton Cancer**
Support Group
Tel: 01704 879352
www.seftoncancersupport.org.uk

**St Helens Cancer Support Group**
Tel: 01744 21831

**Warrington & District Cancer Self-Help Group**
Tel: 01925 453139

**The Wirral Holistic Care Services**
Tel: 0151 652 9313
www.wirralholistic.org.uk

**Widnes & Runcorn Cancer Support Group**
Tel: 0151 423 5730

**Isle of Man**
Manx Cancer Help Association
Tel: 01624 679554
www.manxcancerhelp.org

**Liverpool Sunflowers**
Liverpool Cancer Support
Tel: 0151 726 8934

**National Resource Organisations for Gynae Oncology Patients**

**Macmillan Cancer Support**
89 Albert Embankment London SE1 7UQ
Cancerline: 0808 8080000
Mon-Fri 9am-8pm
www.macmillan.org.uk

**The Daisy Chain Network**
For additional information send an SAE to: The Daisy Chain Network, PO Box 183, Rossendale, Lancashire, BB4 6WZ
Email: membership@media@daisynetwork.org.uk www.daisynetwork.org.uk

The Daisy network is a premature menopause support group which offers advice, information and support for women throughout the UK.

**Menopause Matters**
www.menopausematters.co.uk

For accurate up to date information about the menopause and its treatment options “An easy to use, independent, clinician-led website”.
A support group/helpline led from Helen Jackson, for women (and their family or friends) who have any gynaecological cancer.

**Target Ovarian Cancer**
2 Angelgate, London EL1 2PT
Tel: 02079 235470
[www.targetovariancancer.org.uk](http://www.targetovariancancer.org.uk).

The national ovarian cancer charity working to save lives and help women diagnosed live their lives to the full.

**Ovacome**
Tel: 0845 3710554
[www.ovacome.org.uk](http://www.ovacome.org.uk)

A national Support Group for all those concerned with ovarian cancer.

*Ask your support nurse for a free copy of The Cancer Guide which can guide, support and inform you through your cancer experience.*

**References**

Office for National Statistics


Royal College of Nursing (2014) Gynaecological Cancer Publication code 002 S18

This leaflet can be made available in different formats on request. If you would like to make any suggestions or comments about the content of this leaflet, then please contact the Patient Experience Team on 0151 702 4353 or by email at pals@lwh.nhs.uk.