

Living with Ovarian Cancer

A Quick Guide

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This is a brief summary of 'Living with ovarian cancer' from our website. You will find more detailed information on there. In this information there are sections on

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You can view this information in a larger print on our website.

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 on our website contains lots of information you may find helpful including information about counselling, financial issues and much more.

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 (gynaecological oncologist) about your recovery period. And don't feel you should be back to normal if you don't feel like it. You should check your car insurance policy before you drive as some companies will not insure drivers for a number of weeks after surgery.

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, anxiety and loss of confidence. These menopause symptoms may be quite intense because your ovaries have been suddenly removed, rather than you going into menopause naturally over a longer period of time. If you are finding the symptoms difficult to cope with, talk to your specialist or gynaecology cancer nurse.

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.

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 have 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. When cancer comes back some time after it has been treated, it is called a recurrence. Even if your cancer can't be cured, there are treatments available that can slow it down and help control your symptoms. It may be possible to shrink the cancer 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

Patient information website:

<http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/cancer-help/>

Cancer Information Nurses phone: 0808 800 4040

Gynae C

Phone: 01793 491116

Email: info@gynaec.co.uk

Website: www.gynaec.co.uk

Ovacome

Phone: 0845 371 0554

E-mail: support@ovacome.org.uk

Website: www.ovacome.org.uk

Ovarian Cancer Action

Phone: 0207 380 1730

Email: info@ovarian.org.uk

Website: www.ovarian.org.uk

Target Ovarian Cancer

Phone: 020 7923 5470

Email: info@targetovarian.org.uk

Website: www.targetovarian.org.uk

For more information, visit our website <http://www.cruk.org/cancerhelp>

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 trials in the UK. Our information is based on the best current scientific evidence and reviewed regularly by leading clinicians and experts in health and social care.

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 February 2014. 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. Copyright Cancer Research UK 2014. Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1089464), Scotland (SC041666) and in the Isle of Man (1103)