

## Fact sheet 1

### Signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer

We, Ovacome, are a support network for people affected by ovarian cancer in the UK. We provide information and support, raise awareness and put you in touch with others who are suffering from ovarian cancer.

Ovarian cancer affects approximately 6800 women each year in the UK.

It appears more often in women over 45 and after the menopause.

In most cases, there is no particular reason why the cancer appears. However, a small number of ovarian cancers are caused because of a faulty gene which runs in the family.

On average, a GP will see one new case every five years.

Ovarian cancer can be hard to diagnose, because the symptoms can be similar to quite common and less serious conditions.

If your cancer is found at an early stage, treatment may be more successful and the result better.

Following the UK's first consensus meeting, which we organised with The Eve Appeal, the following are the agreed signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer.

**The three most common symptoms** of ovarian cancer are:

- frequent pain in your pelvis and abdomen;
- your abdomen being constantly bloated – not bloating that comes and goes; and
- difficulty eating and feeling full quickly.

**Other symptoms you can sometimes experience**

- Changes in your bladder habits (for example how often you pass urine)
- Changes in your bowel movements and habits (for example how often you go to the toilet)
- Extreme tiredness
- Backache

Ovarian cancer is relatively uncommon, but if you are worried talk to your GP.

Remember to tell your doctor if you have close family members who have had breast cancer or ovarian cancer.

A smear test screens for cervical cancer, but will not detect ovarian cancer.

If you would like more information or you would like to discuss anything to do with ovarian cancer, phone our support line on 0845 371 0554, Monday to Friday from 9am to 4pm. Or, you can visit our website at [www.ovacome.org.uk](http://www.ovacome.org.uk).

Written by Helen Haggertay RM (BSc Hons),  
Support Line Nurse,  
Ovacome.

July 2009

ovacome  
PO Box 6294, London W1A 7WJ  
Phone: 0845 371 0554  
Website: [www.ovacome.org.uk](http://www.ovacome.org.uk)  
Email: [ovacome@ovacome.org.uk](mailto:ovacome@ovacome.org.uk)

