

Did you know that...?

- ❖ The earlier one's cancer is detected, the higher one's chances of survival.
- ❖ Many cancers of the female reproductive system (cancer of the endometrium, of the cervix, of the ovaries, of the vulva, of the vagina, of the Fallopian tubes, etc.) can be detected early if you undergo regular gynaecological tests (yearly or every 3 years, depending on your state of health, your age, etc.).
- ❖ **Cancer of the uterine canal** (endometrium) can be detected with a Pap test given by a doctor or a gynaecologist.
- ❖ **Ovarian cancer** may be difficult to detect for the following reasons:
 - A progression sometimes without any symptom, especially at the early stages;
 - Even in advanced stages, the cancer can show symptoms similar to those of ordinary ailments;
 - There are no reliable tests in the case of women who show no symptoms.

For all these reasons, proper monitoring by your gynaecologist is essential.

In this brochure, you will find information about uterine canal cancer and ovarian cancer.

Cancer of the uterine canal

What is it?

A cancer of the uterine canal develops in the cells of the neck of the uterus (the section that connects the vagina to the uterus).

What causes it?

We do not know all the factors which can cause a cancer of the uterine canal with certainty. However, certain infections to the **Human Papillomavirus (HPV)** can trigger mutations in the cells of the uterine canal that can develop into cancer in some women. HPV is sexually transmitted, and is a very widespread infection. The use of a contraceptive (condom) can reduce the risk of an HPV infection, but does not constitute a sure form of protection because the virus is transmitted via skin-on-skin contact of those genital regions that are not covered by the contraceptive.

At the present time, there is a free anti-HPV vaccination campaign aimed at girls aged 9 to 26. You can find out more by calling your doctor or your local CLSC.

What are the most common symptoms?

During the gestation period, a cancer of the uterine canal is not necessarily accompanied by any symptoms, but when the cancer is more advanced the following symptoms can show up:

- Vaginal bleeding between menstruations;
- Vaginal bleeding after sexual relations;

- An aching pelvis
- Pain during sexual relations;
- Vaginal bleeding after menopause;
- Etc.

These symptoms can show up without it necessarily meaning that there is a cancer of the uterine canal. As is the case for other types of cancer, only additional tests can determine if it is or isn't really cancer.

Detection of cancer of the uterine canal:

A Pap test, given by a doctor or gynaecologist, can determine the presence of abnormal cells in the uterine canal before a cancer can develop. This test (Pap smear) is not painful and consists in removing some cells from your uterine canal.

Therefore, early detection ensures the fastest and most reliable treatment for pre-cancerous cells.

Ovarian cancer:

What is it?

Ovarian cancer is a cancer that takes roots on the ovaries –reproductive organs which produce women's eggs (ova).

What causes it?

The exact causes are unknown. Many ovarian cancers appear randomly, without any family history. Women who have had breast cancer are more prone to develop ovarian cancer.

What are the most common symptoms? :

- Feeling stuffed (or full after just a few bites);
- Abdominal/pelvic pains;
- Nausea, vomiting, heartburn (acid reflux);
- Gas, intestinal bloating or swelling;
- Indigestion;
- Frequent urination;
- Constipation;
- Weight loss even without dieting (or weight gain);
- Abdominal, bladder or back pain or discomfort;
- Etc.

It is important to remember though that these symptoms are quite common and that most women who feel them do not have ovarian cancer.

However, if they occur every day and last more than three (3) weeks, **you should consult a doctor.**

Detection of ovarian cancer:

A uterine canal smear is not an efficient test to detect ovarian cancer. When you visit your doctor, he or she will examine your pelvis to detect possible anomalies. If necessary, your doctor will prescribe other deeper tests (such as a trans-vaginal ultrasound) or maybe blood tests.

How can one procure a gynaecological test?

Many women do not have a family doctor or a gynaecologist, but you can get a gynaecological test in a walk-in clinic from a general practitioner. Make sure beforehand that the clinic performs this type of test though. If you perceive abnormal bleeding, go to a walk-in clinic or dial **info-santé** at **8-1-1**.

If you prefer to be seen by a **female doctor**, you should indicate it when you make your appointment.

If you have difficulty communicating in either English or French, make sure to be accompanied by someone who can translate. It may be also possible to ask the clinic to provide an interpreter when you make your appointment.

This brochure is to be used in the setting of a more complete information session about gynaecological cancers and breast cancer. Therefore it is not exhaustive.

*SANTÉ-VOUS
CHEZ-VOUS!*

What you should know about cancer of the uterine canal and of the ovaries*

(2010 version)



ACCÉSS

*This leaflet was created thanks to financial support from **Public Health Agency Canada** and **Pfizer**.