

***Survivors Teaching Students: Saving Women's LivesSM* Ovarian Cancer Information and Resources**

The Ovarian Cancer National Alliance is the foremost advocate for women with ovarian cancer in the United States. To advance the interests of women with ovarian cancer, the organization advocates at a national level for increases in research funding for the development of an early detection test, improved health care practices, and life-saving treatment protocols.

Through the *Survivors Teaching Students: Saving Women's LivesSM*, the Ovarian Cancer National Alliance educates health care professionals and raises public awareness of the signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer. The goal of the program is to increase the number of health care providers who recognize the symptoms of and risk factors for ovarian cancer so that the disease is detected sooner.

This handout aims to address questions you may have as a result of the *Survivors Teaching Students* presentation. For more information on the Ovarian Cancer National Alliance, visit: www.ovariancancer.org.

Key Information on Ovarian Cancer

- Ovarian cancer is the most lethal gynecologic cancer and one of the five leading causes of cancer death among women in the United States.
- Each year, approximately 22,000 women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer in the United States and about 15,000 American women die from the disease.
- The majority of cases (81%) are not diagnosed until the disease is advanced and a woman's survival is significantly compromised.
- Currently, there is no reliable screening test for the early detection of ovarian cancer.

Ovarian Cancer Symptoms

Ovarian cancer causes symptoms, even in its early stages.

The symptoms of ovarian cancer are:

- Bloating
- Pelvic or abdominal pain
- Difficulty eating or feeling full quickly
- Urinary symptoms (urgency or frequency)

Other symptoms can include fatigue, indigestion, back pain, pain with intercourse, constipation and menstrual irregularities.

If a woman experiences any of these symptoms for more than a few weeks and they are unusual for her, she should see a gynecologist to receive a pelvic examination, transvaginal ultrasound and a CA 125 blood test.

Ovarian Cancer Risk Factors

Every woman is at risk for ovarian cancer at any age; however, the following factors may increase a woman's risk:

- a personal or family history of breast, colon or ovarian cancer
- increasing age
- nullparity

Factors associated with a decreased risk of ovarian cancer include:

- using oral contraceptives
- having and breastfeeding children
- having a bilateral tubal ligation or hysterectomy
- having a prophylactic oophorectomy

Symptom Diary and Practice Guidance

A packet of tools is available for women to help pursue answers to their concerns that the symptoms they are experiencing may be evidence of ovarian cancer. The **first tool** is a personal Symptom Diary, developed by the Ovarian Cancer National Alliance, which can be used to track persistency of symptoms over time that may indicate the possibility of ovarian cancer. The **second tool** is an Interim Practice Guidance that outlines important steps your doctor may take to evaluate whether your symptoms may be ovarian cancer (see graph on next page).

You can download the entire Symptom Diary and Practice Guidance packet by visiting www.ovariancancer.org/diary.

Figure 1: Management Algorithm for Average-Risk Women with Symptoms Suggestive of Ovarian Cancer

