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Ovarian Cancer

- Ovarian cancer is the fourth leading cause of cancer death among women. It most often occurs in women in their 50's.
- Ovarian cancer accounts for approximately four percent of all women's cancers and is the fourth leading cause of cancer-related death among women in the United States.
- In 2005, an estimated 22,000 women were diagnosed with ovarian cancer, and more than 16,000 women died from the disease. The incidence rate for ovarian cancer has been slowly declining since the early 1990s.
- Some ovarian cancers are caused by inherited gene mutations. The genes in cells carry the hereditary information that is received from the parents. Three hereditary patterns have been identified: ovarian cancer alone, ovarian and breast cancers, and ovarian and colon cancers.
- The following types of family history put women at risk:
 - Women with any type family history of ovarian cancer
 - Women with one first-degree relative (mother, daughter, or sister) with ovarian cancer are at an increased risk
 - Women with one first-degree relative and one second-degree relative (grandmother or aunt) with ovarian cancer are at higher risk
 - Women with two or more first-degree relatives with ovarian cancer are at an even higher risk
- In its early stages, ovarian cancer has few symptoms. The first sign of ovarian cancer is usually an enlarged ovary. The ovaries are located deep within the pelvic cavity, so swelling may go unnoticed until it becomes more advanced.

- Symptoms of more advanced ovarian cancer include:
 - Swollen abdomen (caused by build-up of fluids produced by the tumor)
 - Lower abdominal and leg pain
 - Sudden weight loss or gain
 - Change in bowel or bladder function
 - Nausea
 - Swelling in the legs

- It's difficult for a woman to protect herself from ovarian cancer. Here are a few steps that can be taken to lessen a woman's risk:
 - Get a yearly pelvic exam
 - Report any irregular vaginal bleeding or abdominal pain to your doctor
 - If you have close family members (mother, sister or daughter) with ovarian cancer, discuss your risk factors with your doctor
 - Eat a low-fat diet

- The following are some ways to detect the presence of ovarian cancer:
 - Pelvic exam
 - Ultrasound test
 - CT Scan
 - Biopsy

- When found in its earliest stages, ovarian cancer can be cured 90%-95% of the time. Unfortunately, early ovarian cancer is hard to detect. Many cases of ovarian cancer are found after the cancer has spread to other organs. In these cases, the cancer is much more difficult to treat and cure. Certain factors affect treatment options, such as the patient's age and general health, the type and size of the tumor, and the stage of the cancer. Surgery, radiation therapy and chemotherapy are often used to treat ovarian cancer.