



Event Calendar Advisory

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SEPTEMBER IS OVARIAN CANCER AWARENESS MONTH -- WEAR TEAL ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 7TH TO RAISE AWARENESS OF THE DISEASE

Ovarian cancer affects 1 in 57 women and it can occur at any age. This year, more than 20,000 women will be diagnosed with the disease and an estimated 15,000 will die from it.

Minnesota Ovarian Cancer Alliance (MOCA) wants to change these statistics by raising awareness. On Friday, September 7, the organization encourages you to show your support by wearing teal, the color associated with ovarian cancer.

Symptoms of Ovarian Cancer:

- Bloating
- Pelvic or abdominal pain
- Difficulty eating or feeling full quickly
- Feeling a frequent or urgent need to urinate

Women diagnosed with ovarian cancer report that symptoms are persistent and represent a change from normal for their bodies.

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

Women who have these symptoms almost daily for more than a few weeks should see their doctor, preferably a gynecologist.

How is Ovarian Cancer Detected?

Experts recommend:

- A complete pelvic/rectal exam
- Transvaginal ultrasound
- CA125 blood test

If ovarian cancer is suspected, consult a gynecologic oncologist.

Unlike the Pap smear which screens for cervical cancer and the mammogram for breast cancer, there is currently no consistently reliable test available to detect ovarian cancer in its early stages.

When detected early and treated properly, more than 90% of the women diagnosed will survive longer than five years. But almost 70% of women with the disease are diagnosed in advanced stages when the chance of five-year rate is only about 25%.

Risk Factors

- **Increasing age** – Although ovarian cancer can strike women at any age, 56% of women diagnosed with the disease are older than 65.

The incidence increases dramatically after the age of 50 and peaks between the ages of 55 and 65.

As a result, it is important for women to continue regular gynecologic exams, even after childbearing is complete.

- **Having a family or personal history of ovarian cancer, breast or colon cancer** – Approximately 5-10% of ovarian cancer cases are associated with hereditary risk. Women with personal or family histories of these types of cancer are more likely to develop ovarian cancer before age 50.
- **Not bearing children** – The risk of developing ovarian cancer is reduced with each subsequent pregnancy.

The vast majority of women diagnosed with ovarian cancer (90%) do not have a hereditary link to the disease.

Risk Reduction

At this time, it is impossible to completely eliminate a woman's risk for ovarian cancer, but experts have established that the following can **reduce** a woman's risk:

- **Oral contraceptives** – Regular use reduces the risk of ovarian cancer by 40-50% when taken for at least five years. Several clinical studies have reported that the effects last for years after pill use has ceased.
- **Pregnancy and breast-feeding**
- **Tubal ligation**
- **Hysterectomy**
- **Removal of the ovaries** (prophylactic oophorectomy) This procedure is usually suggested only for women at very high risk – those with two or more first-degree relatives with ovarian cancer or ovarian and breast cancer.

About Minnesota Ovarian Cancer Alliance

Founded in 1999 by a small group of ovarian cancer survivors, the mission of Minnesota Ovarian Cancer Alliance (MOCA) is to fund ovarian cancer research, raise awareness of the disease, and provide support to women with ovarian cancer and their families. In just seven years, MOCA has awarded \$1.7 for research grants, making the organization one of the largest non-governmental funders of ovarian cancer research in the nation.

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