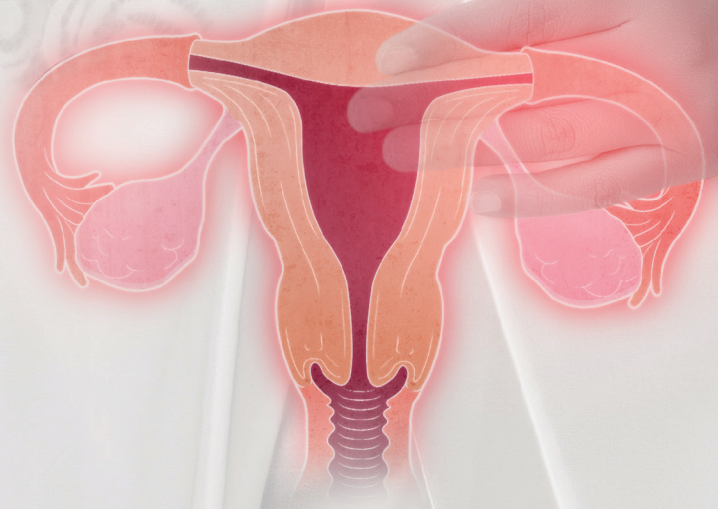




Lancashire  
Gynaecologist  
*Eric Mutema*



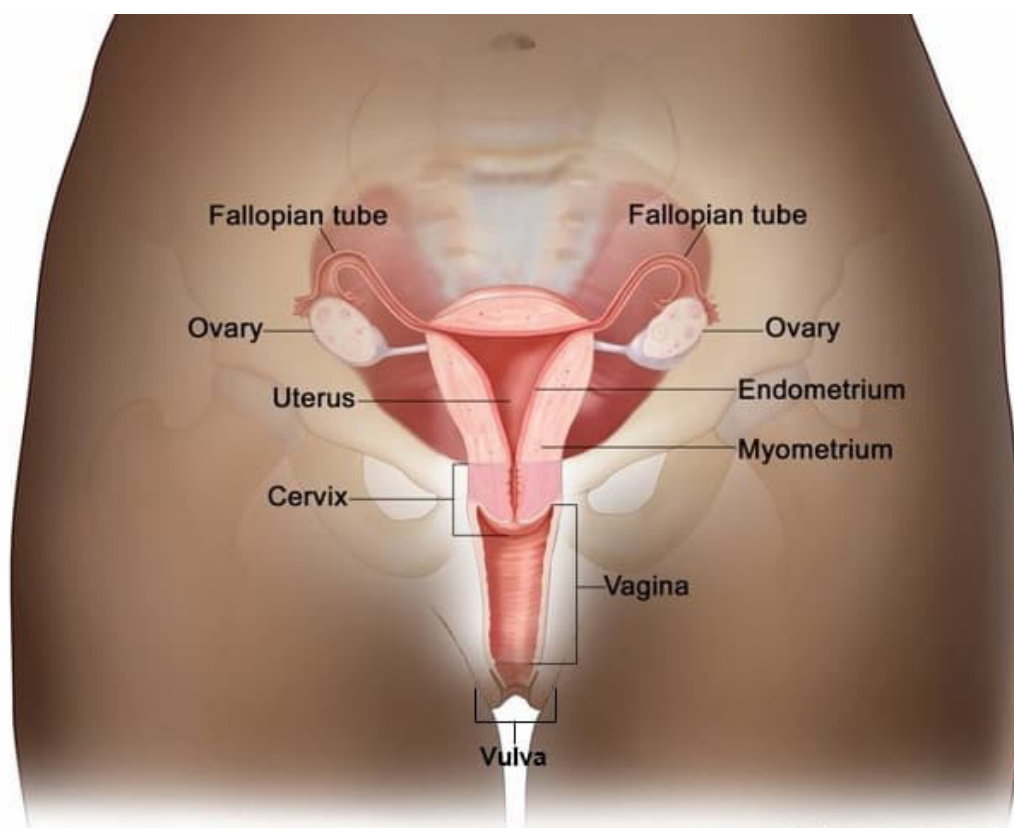
Ovarian Cancer  
– recognise the warning signs

## Ovarian cancer – recognise the warning signs

Ovarian cancer was often referred to as 'the silent killer' because until recently, women presenting with symptoms were often overlooked, their diagnosis came too late, access to effective treatment was limited and the provision of support was not good enough.

Many of the symptoms that women present can indeed be mistaken for other diseases or illnesses, but now, with greater awareness and better treatment options, the early signs of ovarian cancer can be detected and successfully treated.

In this feature, we show why greater awareness of the symptoms of ovarian cancer is so important and why you should seek a diagnosis if they are persistent and unusual for you. It could save your life.



### What is ovarian cancer?

The ovaries are the two small, almond-shaped glands located in the lower stomach (the pelvis), just behind the pubic area. They are a key part of the female reproductive and hormonal system, storing a supply of eggs and producing female sex hormones; oestrogen and progesterone.

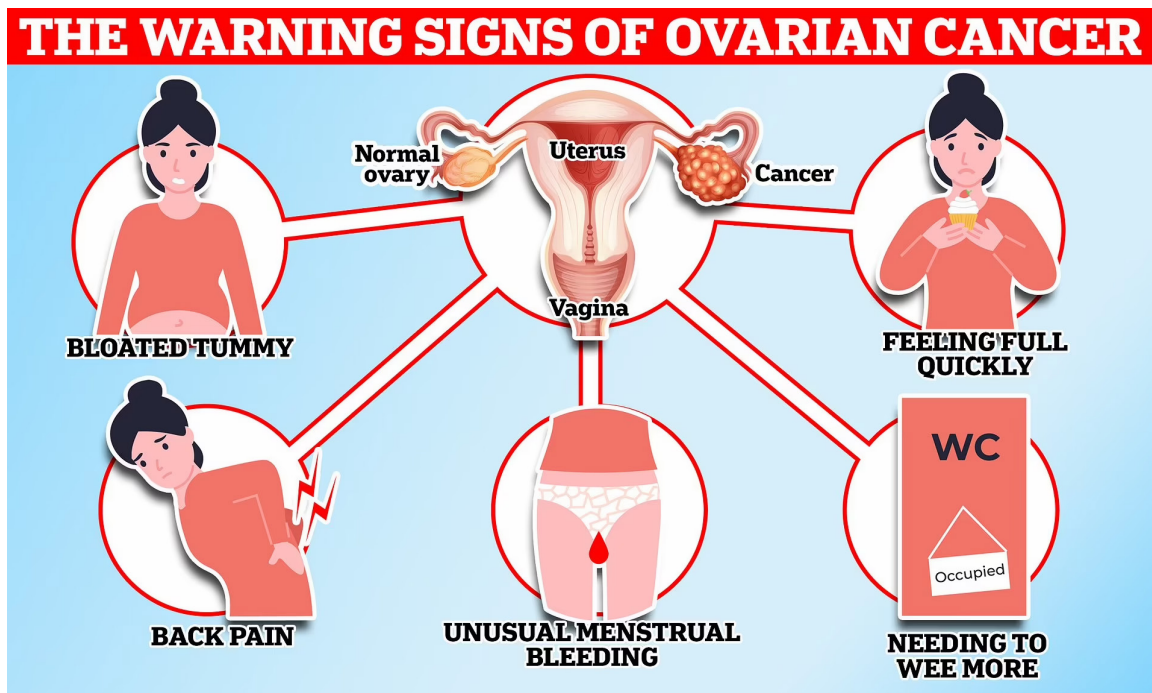
Ovarian cancer happens when the body's natural process of cell renewal and replacement goes wrong and abnormal cells develop around the ovary and fallopian tubes to form a cancerous tumour. The cancerous cells grow into surrounding tissues and can spread to other parts of the body.

## What are the main ovarian cancer symptoms?

Experiencing the following more than 12 times a month::

- a swollen stomach or feeling bloated
- pain or tenderness in the stomach or pelvis
- no appetite or feeling full quickly after eating
- urgent need to urinate or needing to urinate more often

All of these can be symptoms of other, less serious conditions such as irritable bowel or bladder syndrome, ovarian cysts and polycystic ovary syndrome. So, if you're experiencing any of them, it doesn't necessarily mean you have ovarian cancer.



## Other symptoms of ovarian cancer can include:

- indigestion
- constipation or diarrhoea
- back pain
- constant tiredness
- unexplained weight loss
- vaginal bleeding after the menopause

The most important thing to be aware of is that if these symptoms are:

- out of the ordinary
- persistent
- frequent
- severe

then you should make an appointment to see your doctor immediately.





## Does ovarian cancer affect only older women?

No, ovarian cancer can affect women of any age, so it is important to be aware of the symptoms whatever your age. The evidence does show, however, that a considerably higher proportion of older women are affected. Around 84% of cases are diagnosed in women over the age of 50, and more than half of all cases are in women over 65.

## Hereditary cases

Some cases of ovarian cancer are believed to be caused by an inherited genetic variant (or mutated gene). This is often the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene. If you inherit a variant of this gene, you have a much higher risk of developing breast and/or ovarian cancer than the general population. You should inform your GP or specialist of any family history of breast and ovarian cancer. They may suggest you are eligible for genetic testing.

## How is ovarian cancer diagnosed?

**Target Ovarian Cancer** states that two-thirds of women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer too late when the cancer is harder to treat. That equates to 11 women a day in the UK dying. Target also produced a study in 2022 showing that over a quarter of women with ovarian cancer saw their GP three or more times before getting a referral for tests.

That's because there was lower awareness of ovarian cancer compared to other cancers, like breast or cervical cancer. Another significant factor is that your GP will see the common symptoms of ovarian cancer many times a day.

Most of the time it won't be serious but if symptoms persist and worsen, and the GP's suggested course of action hasn't worked, then it's time to consult a specialist.

So, do persist in seeking a diagnosis. The two main UK ovarian cancer charities; **Ovarian Cancer Action** and Target Ovarian Cancer have some excellent advice and resources to help women to prepare for an appointment and ask the right questions.

## Testing and treatment of ovarian cancer

If you're experiencing the symptoms of ovarian cancer more than 12 times a month, your GP should do a blood test. A small blood sample will be taken and sent to a lab where they will measure the level of a protein called CA125 in your sample.

Depending on the results of this blood test, your GP may recommend an ultrasound scan of your stomach and ovaries to show the tissues and organs inside your body. If test results suggest that ovarian cancer might be a possibility, you'll be referred to a gynaecological oncologist for further tests.

There are several types of ovarian cancer and each will depend on the cell and tissue where it started. Treatment will depend on the type, stage and grade of cancer diagnosed. Early diagnosis makes it easier to treat.



Mr Eric Mutema  
Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist  
MBChB, MRCOG



## The Lancashire Gynaecologist can help

If you feel it's time to see a specialist, please contact Mr Eric Mutema, The Lancashire Gynaecologist. He has wide-ranging gynaecological knowledge and is a leading expert in female reproductive health. His practice offers general obstetrics and gynaecology patient care, but it also treats specific conditions. He will investigate every possible problem that may have been missed by previous investigations.

Mr Mutema offers individual attention, an empathetic, compassionate approach and patient-centred care. This includes a full consultation that will take your overall health into account and subsequent treatments will be tailored to meet the needs of the individual woman. So please don't wait and put off seeking treatment if you have any concerns or the symptoms described above. Get in touch, we are here to help you.



Lancashire  
Gynaecologist  
*Eric Mutema*

For more information, contact:

Cheryl Wood  
Secretary to:  
Mr Eric Mutema  
Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist  
MBChB, MRCOG

Tel: 07835487700

Call: [info@lancashiregynaecologist.co.uk](mailto:info@lancashiregynaecologist.co.uk)

[lancashiregynaecologist.co.uk](http://lancashiregynaecologist.co.uk)