

OVARIAN AND PROSTATE CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Health Tips for healthy living.

September, 2008

Sponsored by Amanda Hepler, MD
Rangeley Family Medicine

September has been designated both Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month and Prostate Cancer Awareness month. Both of these cancers affect ten of thousands of Americans every year. Both of them can also be treated successfully, especially if they are detected early.



Ovarian and Prostate Cancer Facts

- 1 in every 6 men will develop prostate cancer at some point in his life.
- An estimated 1 in 58 women will develop ovarian cancer during her life.
- In women age 35-74 ovarian cancer is the fifth leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the U.S.
- Prostate cancer is the second leading cause of male cancer-related deaths in the U.S.
- If diagnosed and treated early the 5-year survival rate for ovarian cancer is over 90%.
- If diagnosed and treated early the 5-year survival rate for prostate cancer is almost 100%.

Screening

At this point there is no simple test to screen for ovarian cancer. Screening and diagnosis often consists of genetic testing combined with other tests and information from personal and family medical histories. Additionally, routine screening for ovarian cancer is not recommended unless there is a strong family history of the disease.

Screening for prostate cancer involves a blood test and a physical exam that takes about 10 minutes. Prostate cancer screening is covered by most health insurance plans. Every man age 50 or older should be screened for prostate cancer yearly.

Risk Factors

Having one or more of these risk factors does not mean that you will get cancer, but it does mean that you are more likely to get cancer than someone with no risk factors.

- Personal and/or family history of cancer is a risk factor for all types of cancer. The closer the relation is, the higher the risk is.
- Undesired infertility is a risk factor for ovarian cancer.
- Having undergone hormone therapy increases cancer risk
- Women who have never been pregnant are at a higher risk
- Smoking can contribute to the growth of prostate cancer tumors and may interfere with chemotherapy treatment.
- Obesity is linked to prostate cancer severity. Men who are significantly overweight have a 33% greater risk of dying from prostate cancer than men who are not obese.
- High bad (LDL) cholesterol may be a risk factor for prostate cancer.
- Increasing age is a risk factor for both prostate and ovarian cancers.

Symptoms

Ovarian Cancer

If you have had the following symptoms for two weeks or more and there is no known reason for the symptoms (like an infection or the flu) make an appointment to see your doctor, especially if you have any of the risk factors listed above.

- Pelvic or abdominal pain or discomfort.
- Gastro intestinal upset such as gas, nausea, and indigestion.
- Urinating frequently and/or urgently.
- Weight gain or loss.
- Pelvic or abdominal swelling, bloating, and/or a feeling of fullness.
- Fatigue.
- Changes in bowel habits.

The key here is persistence, not the strength of the symptoms. So if your stomach has been only slightly upset but it's been going on for more than two weeks you should see a doctor.

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HealthReach Community Health Centers

A nonprofit 501.c.3 organization.



12 locations to serve you:

Bethel Family Health Center – Bethel
Bingham Area Health Center – Bingham
Belgrade Regional Health Center – Belgrade
Lovejoy Health Center – Albion
Madison Area Health Center – Madison
Mt. Abram Regional Health Center – Kingfield
Richmond Area Health Center – Richmond
Rangeley Region Health Center – Rangeley
Strong Area Health Center – Strong
Strong Area Dental Center – Strong
Sheepscot Valley Health Center – Coopers Mills
Western Maine Family Health Center – Livermore Falls

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Prostate Cancer

In the early stages there are no symptoms of prostate cancer, which is why screening is so important. In more advanced stages symptoms include:

- Difficult or frequent urination during the day or at night, difficulty starting urinating or incomplete urinating.
- Blood in the urine.
- Bone pain.
- Change in quality or quantity of semen, loss of potency or libido.
- Pain on ejaculation.



Treatments

Because every person diagnosed with cancer has a different profile, treatments will vary. All treatment options have benefits and drawbacks so it is important to discuss your options with your medical team. Your treatment options may include:

- Surgery. Removal of the cancerous growth and part or all of the organ it is growing on is the most common method of treatment for cancer.
- Chemotherapy. Chemotherapy drugs travel through the bloodstream to kill cancer cells or stop them from growing. Chemotherapy is usually used as a follow-up treatment to surgery.
- Radiation therapy. High-energy x-rays are used in radiation therapy to kill cancer cells and shrink tumors. Radiation is the second-most commonly used treatment for prostate cancer.
- Hormone Therapy. Drugs that block hormones, primary testosterone, can cause prostate cancers to shrink or grow more slowly. Hormone therapy is used for prostate cancer patients whose cancer has spread beyond the prostate or has reoccurred.

Cancer can be successfully prevented and treated, but only if you and your medical providers work together to take preventative measures, screen for cancers, and aggressively treat problems should they arise.

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