

## CANCER FACTS

# Gynaecological Cancer

Gynaecological cancer refers to all cancers of the female reproductive tract (cancers of the cervix, ovaries, uterus, vagina and vulva).

## Queensland<sup>1,2</sup>

- 1168 Queensland women were diagnosed with a gynaecological cancer in 2017.
- 392 Queensland women died from a gynaecological cancer in 2017.
- On average, women diagnosed with gynaecological cancer were 71 percent as likely to live for another five years compared to the general population (ranges from 50 per cent for ovarian cancer to almost 84 per cent for uterine cancer).
- Uterine cancer is the most commonly occurring gynaecological cancer.
- Of the gynaecological cancers, ovarian cancer is the leading cause of death.
- Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable of all cancers through the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination and cervical screening.
- Vaginal cancer is one of the rarest types of gynaecological cancers<sup>3</sup>.

## Gynaecological cancer in Queensland - 2017

Site	Incidence	Deaths
Uterus	534	83
Ovary	264	175
Cervix	189	66
Vulva	84	22
Other female genital organs	97	46
<b>Total</b>	<b>1168</b>	<b>392</b>

## Trends in Queensland<sup>2</sup>

- Between 2004 and 2017, gynaecological cancer diagnosis rates have increased by 0.4 per cent per year. This followed a 0.9 per cent annual decrease in diagnosis rates between 1982 and 2003.

- Gynaecological cancer death rates increased by 1.0 per cent per year between 2010 and 2017. This followed a significant decrease of 1.1 per cent per year between 1982 and 2009.

## Symptoms

If gynaecological cancer is found and treated early, there is an increased chance of surviving the disease. Look out for the following symptoms:

- unusual vaginal bleeding between periods, after menopause or during or after sexual intercourse
- a smelly, watery discharge
- abdominal pain
- unexplained weight loss
- difficulty urinating, blood in urine, passing urine frequently or during the night
- a change in bowel habit
- pain during sexual intercourse
- heavier periods, or periods that last longer than usual
- itching, burning and soreness or pain in the vulva
- a lump, sore, swelling or wart-like growth on the vulva
- thickened, raised skin patches (may be red, white or dark brown)
- a mole on the vulva that changes shape or colour
- blood, pus or other discharge coming from an area of skin or sore spot in the vulva. It may have an offensive or unusual smell or colour (not related to your menstrual period)
- hard or swollen lymph nodes in the groin area
- pain in the pelvic area or rectum
- a lump in the vagina.

Any of these symptoms can happen for other reasons, but it is best to check with your doctor if you are concerned.

# Gynaecological Cancer

## Risk factors<sup>4</sup>

The causes of gynaecological cancers are not fully understood. There are many risk factors that are associated with the developing one or more types of gynaecological cancers, such as:

- increasing age
- having a strong family history of a gynaecological cancer
- identified gene mutations
- reproductive history such as child-bearing
- exposure to hormones – produced by the body or taken as medication
- exposure to diethylstilboestrol (DES) in the womb
- viral infection such as the human papillomavirus (HPV) infection
- lifestyle factors such as smoking and those leading to excess body weight.

However, having these risk factors does not necessarily mean you will develop a gynaecological cancer.

## Reducing cancer risk

There are no known lifestyle measures to prevent gynaecological cancers, however, not smoking and immunisation against HPV may reduce your risk. In addition, Cancer Council Queensland recommends that to reduce your overall cancer risk you; quit smoking, maintain a healthy body weight, eat a healthy diet, be physically active, stay SunSmart, limit alcohol, participate in cancer screening programs (if eligible) and report unusual changes to your doctor immediately.

1. Queensland Cancer Register, 2020. Unpublished data (1982-2017).
2. Queensland Cancer Statistics On-Line, 2020. Viertel Cancer Research Centre, Cancer Council Queensland ([qcsol.cancerqld.org.au](https://qcsol.cancerqld.org.au)). Based on data released by the Queensland Cancer Register (1982-2017; released July 2020).
3. Information and symptoms of vaginal cancer (<https://cancerqld.org.au/cancer-information/types-of-cancer/vaginal-cancer/>)
4. Gynaecological cancer, Cancer Australia (<https://gynaecological-cancer.canceraustralia.gov.au/risk-factors>)

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## Information and support

### Cancer Council 13 11 20

Being diagnosed with cancer or supporting a loved one can leave you with many questions. We want to help you find the answers. Call Cancer Council's 13 11 20 Information and Support line to talk with one of the team.

Our team can provide you with cancer information, emotional and practical support. We can also refer you to Cancer Council Queensland's support programs and services.

This confidential service is available Monday to Friday 9am-5pm (excluding public holidays).

### Cancer Connect

Cancer Connect is a confidential telephone-based peer support service that connects you, your carer or loved ones with a peer support volunteer who has had a similar cancer experience. You can be matched with a Cancer Connect volunteer based on cancer diagnosis, treatment, family or work issues.

### Cancer Counselling Service

Living with a cancer diagnosis, or supporting someone along the way, is rarely easy. Talking things through with a counsellor or psychologist can help you manage your cancer related concerns.

Our Cancer Counselling Service is available for anyone distressed by cancer at any stage. We deliver counselling via telephone and video, with face to face appointments available in some regional offices. Our team includes nurse counsellors and psychologists trained and experienced in helping people affected by cancer.

## Further information and support



13 11 20



Email



Webchat