

Ovarian cancer screening

What is ovarian cancer screening?

Ovarian cancer screening is a way to look for early signs of ovarian cancer in people who have no symptoms of the disease. Doctors can do blood test called CA 125, Imaging(ultrasonography) or both to screen ovarian cancer. Experts do not recommend screening for general people who are not at high risk for ovarian cancer. Screening is recommended only in person with very high risk for ovarian cancer (e.g. [hereditary genetic mutation](#) like BRCA, family history of breast and ovarian cancer, Lynch syndrome)

The goal of screening is to find cancer early. Unfortunately, there is no optimal screening test that can detect ovarian cancer in very early stage.

What is ovarian cancer and how common is it in India?

Cancer is a disease of cells in the body that don't have control over their growth. Normal cells grow and multiply in a systematic manner. The new cells are made only when they are needed. Due to changes in this normal process, cells don't have control and they grow & multiply too quickly. As they grow more & more, they damage normal tissue and organs of the body.

[Ovarian cancer](#) occurs when normal cells in the ovary change into abnormal cells and grow disproportionately without any control. Ovarian cancer occurs most commonly in 50-60 years of age group, but can happen in younger (<20 years) or older women. Ovarian cancer is the 3rd most common female cancer in India. Sometimes ovarian cancer can be hereditary.

What are the tests for ovarian cancer screening?

Screening can involve a blood test, an ultrasound (Sonography), or both. The blood test used most often is called CA 125.

Who should be screened for ovarian cancer?

Till date no significant benefit is found with ovarian cancer screening. For now, experts agree that:

- People who are at low risk for ovarian cancer do not need to be screened.
- People who are at high risk for ovarian cancer, and still have their ovaries, should be screened. People with the highest risk include those with:
 - Family history of ovarian or breast cancer
 - Genetic mutation of BRCA genes
 - Genetic condition called Lynch syndrome (hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer or "HNPCC")

If you have a family members with ovarian cancer or have genes that put you at risk of getting ovarian cancer, discuss the benefit of screening with your doctor.

What are the benefits of being screened for ovarian cancer?

The main benefit of screening is that it might help doctors find cancer early. Cancer treatment in early stage might lower your chances of dying of ovarian cancer.

What happens after screening?

If screening test is normal then your doctor will call you at specific interval for next follow up.

If your test is abnormal, don't panic. Many people who have abnormal results turn out not to have ovarian cancer. If screening test is abnormal then doctor might suggest you more tests to evaluate further. These tests are required to find out whether or not you actually have cancer. Some people require small surgery to know for sure if they have cancer.