

PRIMARY CARE 10 TOP TIPS



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CANCER SUPPORT

To aid early diagnosis of ovarian cancer for GPs

Evidence has shown that there can be delays in women seeking help from their GPs and also in GPs diagnosing ovarian cancer. This set of top tips was developed to improve communication and reduce the potential for misunderstanding and delays.

This set of top tips was developed by a workshop group comprising people affected by ovarian cancer and GPs.

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- 1** Some symptoms are particularly significant: take note of persistent bloating, pain in the pelvis or abdomen, difficulty eating or feeling full quickly and needing to wee more urgently or often than usual.
- 2** Give the patient the opportunity to explain what their specific concerns are. Look out for combinations of symptoms, or symptoms which are frequent, persistent and unusual for the patient, particularly if they happen more than 12 times a month.
- 3** Consider using a symptom diary to provide a clearer perspective for you and the patient.
- 4** Use risk assessment tools to better quantify the risk of ovarian cancer.
- 5** Ovarian cancer is frequently misdiagnosed as IBS or urinary infection. Consider a CA125 test with your routine tests, especially since a first presentation with IBS in the over 50's is rare and unexplained urinary symptoms can be an important early sign of ovarian cancer.
- 6** Perform abdominal and pelvic examinations in women with symptoms suggestive of possible ovarian cancer, but still order the appropriate tests.
- 7** A family history of not only ovarian but also breast cancer is significant, even if it is paternal rather than maternal.
- 8** Safety net clearly; if you want the patient to make a follow up appointment, suggest they do it then and there rather than getting the patient to book it later.
- 9** Re-evaluate if symptoms persist or worsen after negative CA125 and perform abdominal and pelvic examinations.
- 10** 47% of women mistakenly believe that a normal smear test rules out ovarian cancer.