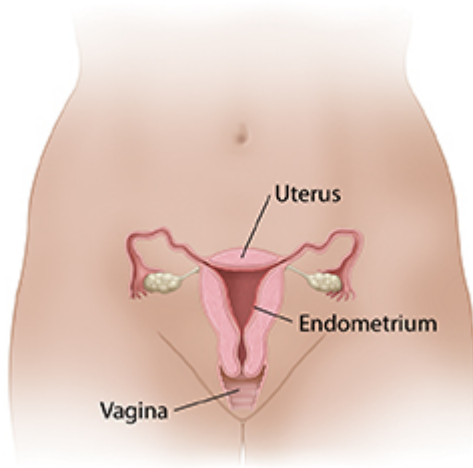

What Is Endometrial Cancer?

Cancer usually starts when normal cells in the body change (mutate). They start growing (replicating) out of control. Cancer cells can form lumps of tissue. They are called tumors. Cancer that starts in the lining of the uterus is called endometrial cancer.



Understanding the uterus and endometrium

The uterus is part of the female reproductive system. It's the organ that holds the baby during pregnancy. The endometrium is the inside lining of the uterus. Each month, from puberty to menopause, the lining grows and thickens. This is to get ready for pregnancy. This thickened lining helps to nourish a growing baby. The lining of the uterus is shed if a person doesn't become pregnant. This is their period. Endometrial cancer starts in the cells of this lining.

When endometrial cancer forms

The endometrium is the most common place in the uterus for cancer to start. It's the most common type of cancer of the female reproductive system. Like most cancers, endometrial cancer can spread. It can spread within the uterus. It can also spread to nearby organs and other parts of the body. It's called metastasis when cancer spreads outside the uterus. The more cancer spreads, the harder it is to treat.

The most common symptom of endometrial cancer is abnormal vaginal bleeding. Or it's vaginal bleeding after menopause. Abnormal vaginal bleeding has no cycle to it like menstruation does. Call your healthcare provider if you have unexpected vaginal bleeding. Ideally, endometrial cancer is found when it's small and has not spread (metastasized). This is when the cancer is easiest to treat. It is also easiest to cure.

Treatment choices for cancer of the uterus

You and your healthcare provider will talk about your treatment choices. They may include:

- **Surgery to remove the uterus (hysterectomy).** Sometimes the fallopian tubes, ovaries, or nearby lymph nodes are also taken out.

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- **Radiation therapy.** This treatment uses focused beams of high energy to kill cancer cells.
 - **Chemotherapy.** This treatment uses strong medicines to kill cancer cells.
 - **Hormone therapy.** This treatment affects hormone levels. It may help slow the growth of cancer cells. It may be used in some cases to avoid hysterectomy. This allows for pregnancy in the future.
 - **Targeted therapy.** This treatment uses medicines that target the abnormal changes in the cancer cells.
 - **Immunotherapy.** This treatment uses medicines that help your body's own immune system better fight cancer.