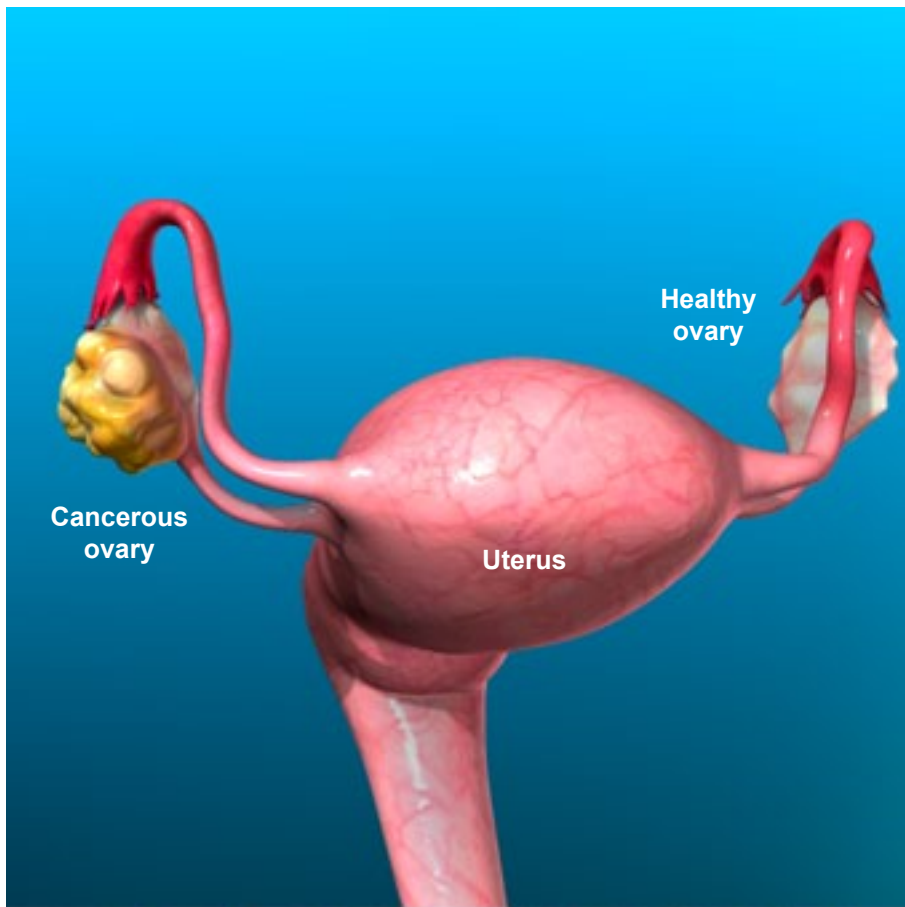


Ovarian Cancer



Overview

This is a growth of cancer cells in one or both of your ovaries. These organs are part of a woman's reproductive system. They make your egg cells. They also make hormones.

Causes

We aren't sure what causes ovarian cancer. It starts with a mutation in a cell's DNA. These are the genetic blueprints that tell cells how to grow and function. The mutation makes the cells divide abnormally and uncontrollably. A tumor is a mass of these abnormal cells. Tumors that don't invade other tissues are called "benign." They are not cancer. Tumors that spread into other tissues are called "malignant." This is cancer.

Risk Factors

Many factors can raise your risk for ovarian cancer. Your risk gets higher as you get older. It's higher if certain genes have been passed down to you. You're more likely to get this cancer if you have had breast cancer. Some other factors include being overweight, using birth control, taking fertility drugs or taking certain hormones.

Types

Cancer can begin in the cells that cover the outer surface of the ovary. It can begin in the cells that produce your eggs. Or, it can begin in the cells that make hormones. These different cells can make different types of tumors.

Symptoms

A heavy feeling in your pelvic region may be a sign of ovarian cancer. You may feel pain in your lower abdomen or back. You may bleed from your vagina. Your periods may be abnormal. You may gain or lose weight. You may have nausea, vomiting or gas.

Treatment and Screening

Treatment depends on your cancer and your needs. Catching cancer early is important. See your doctor regularly. And talk with your doctor about ovarian cancer screening.