III. Can Genetic Counseling Help Me Manage the risk of Ovarian Cancer?

The genetic counseling process can help patients make informed medical management decisions relating to genetic testing and hereditary risks. Finding out about a genetic risk is especially important for ovarian cancer, a disease that is hard to detect early. If you are identified to be at elevated risk for developing ovarian cancer, it is important to speak to your doctor about screening and prevention measures, including increased surveillance, different medications, and/or preventive surgeries.

IV. Can Genetic Testing Benefit Me if I Have Already Been Diagnosed with Ovarian Cancer?

Yes, ovarian cancer is linked to the development of other cancers, such as breast, colon, and endometrial (uterine) cancer. Assessing your risk through genetic testing can help you make medical decisions regarding your future health management options, including personalized treatment strategies.

V. Where Can I go for Genetic Testing?

Multiple healthcare provider types can provide genetic testing, including doctors, nurses, physician assistants and genetic counselors. Genetic counselors are uniquely specialized to provide these services. An appointment with a genetic counselor could be in person at many hospitals and clinics throughout the US. Alternatively, many telephone or video genetic counseling options are available as well. Visit https://ww.nsgc.org/page/find-a-genetic-counselor to find a genetic counselor near you. If there is no genetic counselor available near you, make sure to speak to your other healthcare provider about receiving a genetic consultation and genetic testing.

Tell Every Amazing Lady About Ovarian Cancer Louisa M. McGregor Ovarian Cancer Foundation also known as T.E.A.L.®

T.E.A.L.® was founded in 2009 by Pamela Esposito- Amery and her late sister Louisa to address the needs of women everywhere in the fight to overcome ovarian cancer. Through outreach programs and events, public awareness campaigns across the country, and the T.E.A.L.® Official Walk/Run, T.E.A.L.® raises both visibility and funds. The organization dedicates significant resources to educating and mobilizing national medical experts to advance the science of and improve treatments for ovarian cancer in some of the world's most prestigious hospitals, universities and research centers.

Our programs educate, engage, and empower people of all ages and backgrounds in New York City to Tell Every Amazing Lady® about the signs, symptoms and risk factors for this cancer as well as providing support and resources to individuals from diagnosis to remission.

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Ovarian Cancer & Genetic Testing

How can genetic testing help me manage my risk for ovarian cancer?

Ovarian Cancer

I. What is it?

The ovaries are organs in the female reproductive system which produce eggs and release female hormones such as estrogen. The eggs travel from the ovary through the fallopian tubes into the uterus when they are fertilized. Ovarian cancer can start in the ovaries or the fallopian tubes. It occurs when cells make the ovary grow out of control and form a tumor.

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II. How common is it?

Ovarian cancer accounts for 3% of all cancers in women and is the fifth leading cause of cancer deaths in the female population. About 1 in 78 women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer each year. In the United States alone there will be more than 20,000 women diagnosed each year, and up to 14,000 will die from this disease. Ovarian cancer mainly affects women over 50 years of age.

IMPORTANT FACT:

There is currently no effective screening test for ovarian cancer; because of this, it is often caught at a late stage. However, if ovarian cancer is detected and treated early, the five-year survival is greater than 92%.

III. Sign and Symptoms of Ovarian Cancer

- Vague but persistent and unexplained gastrointestinal complaints such as gas, nausea, and indigestion
- Abdominal bloating, pelvic and/or abdominal pain, and/or feeling of fullness
- Frequency and/or urgency of urination
- Unexplained change in bowel habits (constipation or diarrhea)
- Unexplained weight gain or loss
- Unusual fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Back pain
- New and unexplained abnormal postmenopausal bleeding

IV. Who Can I Speak to About This?

If you have any persistent symptoms described above, any personal history of other cancer, and/or family history of breast, or any gynecological cancer, speak to your healthcare provider about genetic testing options. You can also ask for a referral to a genetic counselor. Genetic counseling can help assess genetic risks and better inform you and your doctor regarding medical management options and help guide cancer screening and other preventive measures. Genetic counseling is for anyone who has a personal or family history of cancer or any known family history of a genetic condition.

What is Genetic Counseling?

Genetic counseling is defined as "a process to evaluate and understand a family's risk of an inherited medical condition" (National Society of Genetic Counselors, 2018). A genetic counselor collects a personal and family history, performs a hereditary risk assessment, and counsels patients on the risks, benefits, and limitations of genetic testing.

I. Ovarian Cancer and Genes

Our bodies are composed of millions of cells which contain instructions for the body to function. These instructions are called genes and they are composed of DNA. Sometimes a gene can have a change or mutation that causes the cell to grow uncontrollably, causing cancer. All cancer is genetic but not all cancer is hereditary. Hereditary cancer risk can be passed down to children when a mutated gene is present in either the parent's egg or sperm cell that creates that baby. If a person has such a mutation or change in a cancer gene they have a 50/50 chance of passing it down to future children. Any person who has cancer genetic testing should share their results with other close family members, because these results can impact the entire family's risks for cancer.

You may have an increased risk (up to 63% lifetime risk) for developing ovarian cancer if you or a family member has a mutation in any of the following genes:

- BRCA1 or BRCA2
- Lynch Syndrome Genes (MLH1, MSH2, MSH6, PMS2, EPCAM) TP53
- (Li-Fraumeni syndrome) BRIP1,
- RAD51C, RAD51D, STK11

II. What Can I Expect to Happen in a Genetic Counseling Appointment?

A genetic counselor will review your personal and family history, help asses the risk for a hereditary cancer in your family, and review the best options for genetic testing. The genetic counselor will also discuss the implications of genetic test results, as well as options for health management that may include other cancer screening and prevention strategies.

Risk factors for ovarian cancer

- Increased age (over 50)
- Personal or family history of ovarian, breast, endometrial, or colon cancer
- Uninterrupted ovulation (having infertility, miscarriages, or no pregnancies) Endometriosis
- (painful disorder where uterine tissue develops outside the uterus)
- A family member with positive genetic testing
- Ashkenazi Jewish heritage

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