

GYNAECOLOGICAL CANCER

Queensland^{1,2}

- ✦ Gynaecological cancer refers to all cancers of the female reproductive tract (cancers of the cervix, ovaries, uterus, vagina and vulva).
- ✦ 1065 Queensland women were diagnosed with a gynaecological cancer in 2016 (the most recent figures available).
- ✦ 399 Queensland women died from a gynaecological cancer in 2016.
- ✦ On average, women diagnosed with gynaecological cancer were 71 per cent as likely to live for another five years compared to the general population (ranges from 50 per cent for ovarian cancer to almost 83 per cent for uterine cancer).
- ✦ Uterine cancer is the most commonly occurring gynaecological cancer.
- ✦ Of the gynaecological cancers, ovarian cancer is the leading cause of death.
- ✦ Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable of all cancers through human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination and cervical screening. For more information on cervical cancer please see cancerqld.org.au/research/queensland-cancer-statistics/fact-sheets/
- ✦ Vaginal cancer is one of the rarest types of gynaecological cancers³.

Gynaecological cancer in Queensland, 2016

Site	Incidence	Deaths
Uterus	456	104
Ovary	250	170
Cervix	191	60
Vulva	79	28
Other female genital organs	89	37
Total	1065	399

Trends in Queensland²

- ✦ Between 2004 and 2016, gynaecological cancer incidence rates have increased by 0.4 per cent per year. This followed a 0.9 per cent annual decrease in incidence rate between 1982 and 2003.

¹ Queensland Cancer Register, 2019. Unpublished data (1982-2016).

² Queensland Cancer Statistics On-Line, 2019. Viertel Cancer Research Centre, Cancer Council Queensland (qcsol.cancerqld.org.au). Based on data released by the Queensland Cancer Register (1982-2065; released July 2019).

³ Information and symptoms of vaginal cancer (<https://cancerqld.org.au/cancer-information/types-of-cancer/vaginal-cancer/>)

- ✦ Mortality rates due to gynaecological cancer have increased by 1.4 per cent per year between 2010 and 2016. This followed a significant decrease of 1.1 per cent per year between 1982 and 2009.

Detection and symptoms

- ✦ If the cancer is found and treated early, there is an increased chance of surviving the disease.
- ✦ There are a number of changes women should look out for. The changes may be due to many causes other than cancer but should always be brought to the attention of a doctor.
- ✦ Women should consult their general practitioner about the following:
 - Irregular vaginal bleeding between periods, after menopause or during or after sexual intercourse;
 - Changes to the skin of the vulva such as redness, ulceration or irritation and itching;
 - Discomfort or bleeding during or after intercourse
 - Pelvic pain, swollen legs or backache; and
 - Unusual abdominal bloating

Risk Factors⁴

The causes of gynaecological cancers are not fully understood. There are many factors that are associated with the risk of developing one or more types of gynaecological cancers such as,

- Increasing age.
- Having a strong family history of a gynaecological cancer.
- Identified gene mutations.
- Reproductive history, such as child-bearing.
- Exposure to hormones – produced by the body or taken as medication.
- Exposure to diethylstilboestrol (DES) in the womb.
- Viral infection such as human papillomavirus (HPV) infection.
- Lifestyle factors such as smoking and those leading to excess body weight.

However, having these risk factors does not guarantee a woman will develop a gynaecological cancer.

Prevention

There are no known lifestyle measures to prevent gynaecological cancers, however not smoking and immunisation against HPV may reduce your risk. In addition, Cancer Council Queensland recommends that to reduce your overall cancer risk you; quit smoking, maintain a healthy body weight, eat a healthy diet, be physically active, stay SunSmart, limit alcohol, participate in cancer screening programs (if eligible) and report unusual changes to your doctor immediately.

⁴ Gynaecological cancer, Cancer Australia (<https://gynaecological-cancer.canceraustralia.gov.au/risk-factors>)

Information and Support

Cancer Council 13 11 20

Being diagnosed with cancer or supporting a loved one can leave you with many questions. We want to help you find the answers. Call Cancer Council 13 11 20 Information and Support line to talk with one of the team.

Our team can provide you with cancer information, emotional and practical support. We can also refer you to Cancer Council Queensland's support programs and services.

This confidential service is available Monday to Friday 9am-5pm (excluding public holidays).

Cancer Connect

Cancer Connect is a confidential telephone-based peer support service that connects you, your carer or loved ones with a peer support volunteer who has had a similar cancer experience. You can be matched with a Cancer Connect volunteer based on cancer diagnosis, treatment, family or work issues.

Cancer Counselling Service

Living with a cancer diagnosis, or supporting someone along the way, is rarely easy. Talking things through with a counsellor or psychologist can help you manage your cancer related concerns.

Our Cancer Counselling Service is available for anyone distressed by cancer at any stage. We are a telephone-based counselling service, with face to face appointments available in some regional offices. Our team included nurse counsellors and psychologists trained and experienced in helping people affected by cancer.

For further information and support, please call Cancer Council 13 11 20

Disclaimer: The information in this publication should not be used as a substitute for advice from a properly qualified medical professional who can advise you about your own individual medical needs. It is not intended to constitute medical advice and is provided for general information purposes only. Information on cancer, including the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of cancer, is constantly being updated and revised by medical professionals and the research community.

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