

## What are the signs and symptoms?

In the early stages there may be no signs and symptoms but some women may have noticed:

- bleeding between periods or after intercourse
- bleeding anytime after your periods have stopped
- increased vaginal discharge, which may be offensive

In advanced disease symptoms may also include:

- back pain
- blood in your urine
- pain when passing urine
- rectal bleeding
- swelling of the legs

These symptoms may also be due to other conditions. You should seek a medical opinion. (RCN,2000).

## Diagnosing Cancer of the Cervix

A full medical history will be undertaken and a number of other tests may be carried out before a definite diagnosis can be made. This may include:

- vaginal examination
- colposcopy (looking at the cervix with a small microscope)
- biopsy, (a small piece of tissue taken from the cervix for further examination under a microscope)

- examination under anaesthetic (EUA), to examine the cervix, uterus, rectum and bladder while you are asleep
- MRI scan. See Clatterbridge Centre for Oncology (CCO) leaflet
- Intravenous Urogram (IVU), which shows up any abnormalities in the kidneys or urinary system

Other investigations may be added to these to allow the doctor to determine the site and stage of the cancer, in order to plan your treatment.

## Stages of Cancer

Staging is a process of investigations which may be used to determine type/size of the tumour and if there is any spread. Staging is important to help decide treatment options.

## Stages of Cancer of the Cervix

The following stages are used for cancer of the cervix.

- Stage 1 Cancer found only in the cervix
- Stage 2 Cancer extends beyond the cervix into the upper part of the vagina.
- Stage 3 Cancer extends to the pelvic wall and lower third of the vagina.
- Stage 4 Cancer extends beyond the true pelvis into other organs, i.e. bladder, rectum

Recurrent Disease means the cancer has come back (recurred) after it has been treated.

## Treatment Options

There are three main treatment options for cancer of the cervix, it may be that one or a combination of treatments will be recommended to you.

- Surgery
- Radiotherapy
- Chemotherapy
- Radiotherapy and Chemotherapy combined

The type of treatment that is best for you will be decided by your consultant in discussion with yourself.

## Clinical Trials

Clinical trials are research studies involving patients which compare a different type of medical care with the best treatment currently available. You may be approached regarding a clinical trial which your consultant or specialist nurse will be able to discuss with you. CancerBackup produce a booklet which may be helpful to you.

## Surgery

Surgical treatment involves the removal of the cervix and uterus (Total Abdominal Hysterectomy), sometimes the lymph nodes are removed as well (Wertheims/Radical Hysterectomy). On

occasion the ovaries and tubes will also be removed. This is then called Total Abdominal Hysterectomy and Bilateral Salpingo - Oophorectomy (TAH + BSO). A Radical Trachelectomy is an operation removing the tumour - which may help preserve fertility. This is a possible option for early stage disease. (See leaflet 'Trachelectomy')

## Radiotherapy

See (CCO) Information Leaflet

Radiotherapy treatment is given from the outside from a machine called a linear accelerator. Treatment can also be internal. This is given by placing a tube containing a radiotherapy treatment source in the Vagina (under sedation or anaesthetic) for a period of time, similar to a large tampon.

The type of radiotherapy and length of time will be planned and decided individually between the doctor and yourself. (see CCO radiotherapy booklet for more information).

Following radiotherapy you may suffer from vaginal dryness and narrowing. Scar tissue may slowly develop in the vagina resulting in either narrowing or shortening of the vagina. Your doctor, nurse or therapy radiographer may advise you to use a vaginal dilator and will discuss this with you. In some cases Chemotherapy and Radiotherapy together may be a treatment option.

## Chemotherapy

Depending on the type and stage of your cancer, your doctor may suggest chemotherapy or chemotherapy and radiotherapy combined. (see CCO booklet & specific information sheets).

## Life and Relationships

Most people feel overwhelmed when they are told they have cancer.

- Many different emotions arise which can cause confusion.
- Reactions differ from one person to another.
- There is no right or wrong way to feel.
- You may experience the whole range of personal emotions and reactions both similar or different from family and friends.
- Support and guidance is available in coping with these feelings.
- Many people find great comfort in their faith and/or religious and spiritual beliefs.

Following the diagnosis of cancer and your subsequent treatment, you may experience physical changes. There may be some issues/concerns you wish to raise /explore, i.e.

- Body Image
- Weight Gain/loss
- Sexual Health
- Menopause Symptoms
- Others

Your support nurse will be able to sup-

port you by explaining about the issue/concern and provide advice and information if required. This may help you adjust/cope with these changes. This may include involvement of other members of the Health Care Team (HCT) i.e.

- Dietician
- Lymphoedema Practitioner
- Social Worker
- Physiotherapist
- Occupational Therapist and your Primary Health Care Team (PHCT), General Practitioner (GP), District Nurse (DN), Community Macmillan Nurse (CM)

You may not be aware of who can help with changes in social and financial matters, but your support nurse can put you in touch with the relevant people who can provide guidance and advice in these and other aspects, including childcare, how to tell the children and practical day to day issues.ie.Macmillan Social Worker.

You may wish to explore information and coping methods to help yourself. Therefore, the following booklets may be helpful, (there are many others):

- Adjusting to life after cancer - CancerBackup
- Close relationships & cancer - Cancerlink
- life with cancer - Cancerlink
- Sexuality & Cancer - CancerBackup
- Body image and sexuality - Cancerlink

## Complementary Therapies

Complementary therapies may be helpful to you and your family.

There are many different types i.e.

- Reflexology
  - Massage
  - Relaxation
- and many others. Your support nurse can advise you by providing information regarding the appropriateness for you and how to access them.

## Your Follow Up Care

Your Gynaecology Support Nurse/Clinical Nurse Specialist will be also be able to offer you and your family advice, information and support regarding your cancer, subsequent treatment and associated health issues.

## Equal Opportunities

The hospital is committed to promoting an environment, which provides equal opportunities for all patients, visitors and staff. If you have special requirements such as dietary needs, interpreter services, disability needs or a preference for a female doctor, please do not hesitate to discuss this with a member of staff who will try to help you.

## Support Networks Available Locally

Further information, advice and support is available for you/partner family from:

Knowsley  
Lyndale Cancer Support Centre  
Tel: 0151 489 3538

Sefton Cancer Support Group  
Tel: 01704 876613  
www.seftoncancersupport.org.uk

St Helens Cancer Support Group  
Tel: 01965 632233/01744 884097

Warrington & District Cancer Self-Help Group  
Tel: 01925 489540/01928 635925  
07734 052576  
www.cancerbackup.org.uk

Wirral Cancer Support Group  
Tel: 0151 645 7824/0151 648 5604  
www.cancerbackup.org.uk

The Wirral Holistic Therapeutic Cancer Centre  
Tel: 0151 652 9213  
www.wirralholistic.org.uk

Widnes & Runcorn Cancer Support Group  
Tel:0151 423 5730  
www.widnesruncornsg.org.uk

Isle of Man  
Manx Cancer Help Association  
Tel: 01624 579554

Liverpool  
Liverpool Cancer Support  
Tel: 0151 726 8934

This leaflet has been written to help you understand about Cancer of the Cervix - (Cervical Cancer), its diagnosis, treatment and support available. You may wish to discuss some aspects with your doctor or support nurse.

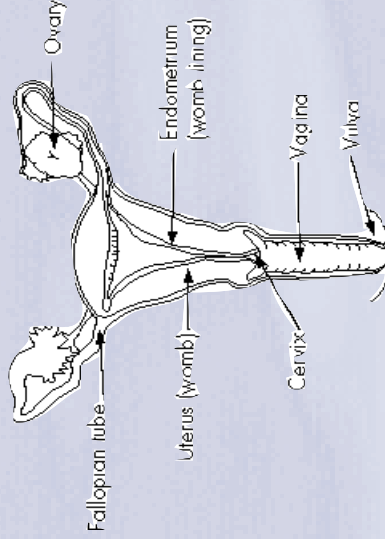
## What is Cancer?

The organs of the body are made up of cells. Cancer is a disease of these cells. The cells normally divide in an orderly manner. Sometimes the cells divide out of control - developing into a lump/tumour. A tumour which is malignant consists of cancer cells which have the ability to spread beyond the original site, destroying surrounding tissue. Sometimes they can break away and spread to other parts of the body.

## The Cervix

The cervix is the lower part of the uterus, often called the neck of the womb. Most of the cervix is visible from the vagina. It is from a small opening in the centre of the cervix (cervical os) that smears are taken.

Situated close to the cervix is a collection of small glands called lymph nodes. The lymph nodes make up part of the lymphatic system, which is one of the body's defence systems.



## How does Cancer of the Cervix develop?

We may not know the exact cause of your cancer, but some wart virus infections (Human Papilloma Virus) have been linked to cancer of the cervix. Cancer of the cervix can take many years to develop. There are two main types of cervical cancer, one (squamous) forms on the outside of the cervix and this is the one detected by the smear test, the other (adeno) is found deeper in the cervix and is more difficult to detect.

Approximately 3,000 women each year are diagnosed as having cervical cancer, in England and Wales (O.N.S. 2005). With progress in screening and early detection the numbers of women with cervical cancer are falling (O.N.S. 2005). An early diagnosis may lead to successful treatment.

## National Resource Organisations for Gynaecology Patients

### Cancer Backup

3 Bath Place, Rivington Street,  
London EC2A 3JR  
Tel: 0207 7392280  
Freephone: 0808 800 1234  
(Mon-Fri 9am-8pm)  
www.cancerbackup.org.uk

National UK support organisation for all cancers, staffed by specialists providing information and counselling. They have recently compiled a fact sheet on Primary Peritoneal Cancer which can be requested by telephone and will be included in their website and in the Fact File next year. They also have a fact sheet on ascites.

### The Daisy Chain Network

For additional information send an SAE to:  
The Daisy Chain Network, PO Box 183,  
Rossendale, Lancashire, BB4 6WZ  
Email:  
membership&media@daisynetwork.org.uk  
www.daisynetwork.org.uk

The Daisy network is a premature menopause support group which offers advice, information and support for women throughout the UK.

### Menopause Matters

www.menopause.co.uk

For accurate up to date information about the menopause and its treatment options "An easy to use, independent, clinician-led website".

### Gynae C

1 Bollingbroke Road, Swindon SN2 2LB  
Tel: 01793 491116  
Email: GynaeC@yahoo.com  
www.communicate.co.uk/wilts.gynaec

A support group/helpline run by Helen Jackson for women (and their family or friends) who have any gynaecological cancer.

### Jo's Trust

Weedon Villa, Everdon, Northants  
NN11 3BQ  
Tel: 01327 341965 - Pamela's direct line but she is happy to speak to patients.  
Email: Pamela@jostrust.co.uk  
www.jostrust.co.uk

Established in June 1999 Jo's Trust is a registered charity dedicated to women and their families and friends affected by pre-cancer and cancer of the cervix. The trust's principal activity is the provision of good information, confidential medical advice and support about every aspect of this illness through its website.

### Ovarome

Elizabeth Garret Anderson Hospital,  
Huntley Street, London WC1E 6DH  
Tel: 0207 3809589  
www.ovacome.org.uk

A national Support Group for all those concerned with ovarian cancer. Has recently adopted a new corporate logo.

### VACO

Vulva Awareness Campaign Organisation  
Tel: 0161 747 5911  
Email: vacouk@yahoo.com or  
carolvaco2003@yahoo.com  
www.vaco.co.uk

Help, support and friendly advice coordinated by a patient - Carol Jones.

Ask your support nurse for a free copy of *The Cancer Guide* which can guide, support and inform you through your cancer experience.

## References

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[www.cancerbackup.org.uk](http://www.cancerbackup.org.uk)
- CancerBackup (2002) Understanding Clinical Trials

Please note that Liverpool Women's NHS Foundation Trust is a smoke free site. Smoking is not allowed inside the hospital building or within the hospital grounds, car parks and gardens.

Staff are available to give advice about stopping smoking, please ask your Nurse about this.

**Liverpool Women's NHS Foundation Trust**

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Telephone: 0151 708 9988  
Visit our Web site at [www.lwh.nhs.uk](http://www.lwh.nhs.uk)

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# Cancer of the Cervix

**Liverpool Women's NHS Foundation Trust**

