



Living Well North Tyneside

Supporting Health and Wellbeing

Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month takes place every **March** to raise awareness, improve early detection, and support those affected by ovarian cancer. Often called the silent killer, ovarian cancer is the sixth most common cancer in women in the UK and can be difficult to diagnose in its early stages.

This month is dedicated to education, support, and fundraising to help improve survival rates and treatment options for those affected.

What is Ovarian Cancer?

Ovarian cancer is a disease that affects the ovaries, the reproductive organs responsible for producing eggs and hormones. If left undiagnosed and untreated, the cancer can spread to other parts of the body.

Types of Ovarian Cancer

There are several types of ovarian cancer, with the most common being:

- **Epithelial ovarian cancer** – The most common type, affecting the outer surface of the ovary.
- **Germ cell ovarian cancer** – A rare form that usually develops in younger women.
- **Stromal ovarian cancer** – Affects the hormone-producing cells of the ovaries.

Signs & Symptoms of Ovarian Cancer

Ovarian cancer symptoms can often be mistaken for other conditions, which is why early diagnosis is challenging. The key is to recognise persistent and frequent symptoms that do not go away.

Common Symptoms:

- Persistent bloating – Not just occasional bloating but feeling bloated most days.
- Pelvic or abdominal pain – Ongoing discomfort in the lower tummy area.
- Difficulty eating or feeling full quickly – A sudden change in appetite.
- Needing to urinate more often or urgently – Increased trips to the toilet.

Other symptoms may include:

- Unexplained weight loss
- Extreme tiredness
- Changes in bowel habits (constipation or diarrhoea)
- Pain during sex

If you experience these symptoms for three weeks or more, it's important to see your GP as soon as possible.

Risk Factors

While ovarian cancer can affect anyone with ovaries, some factors may increase the risk:

- **Age** – Most cases occur in women over 50, particularly after menopause.
- **Family history** – A family history of ovarian or breast cancer may increase the risk, particularly if BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene mutations are present.
- **Endometriosis** – This condition, where tissue similar to the lining of the uterus grows outside the womb, may increase the risk.
- **Hormonal factors** – Certain hormone replacement therapies (HRT) and factors such as early menstruation or late menopause may influence risk.

Diagnosis and Treatment

If ovarian cancer is suspected, a GP may recommend tests such as a CA125 blood test and an ultrasound scan. If cancer is detected, further tests, including CT scans and biopsies, may be required to determine the stage and spread of the disease.

Treatment options often include:

1. **Surgery** – To remove as much of the cancer as possible, sometimes involving the ovaries, fallopian tubes, and uterus.
2. **Chemotherapy** – Used to shrink tumours before surgery or destroy any remaining cancer cells afterward.
3. **Targeted therapy** – This involves drugs that specifically attack cancer cells, often used for advanced cases.

Raising Awareness and Supporting the Cause

Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month is an opportunity to encourage conversations about early symptoms and the importance of seeking medical advice. Here's how you can help:

- Learn the symptoms and share information with family and friends.
- Wear teal, the colour representing ovarian cancer awareness.
- Support charities such as Target Ovarian Cancer, Ovarian Cancer Action, and The Eve Appeal, which fund research and provide support for those affected.
- Take part in fundraising events or campaigns such as Walk in Her Name, which raises funds for ovarian cancer research.

Local Support in North Tyneside

If you or a loved one has been affected by ovarian cancer, there are local organisations that can offer support:

Maggie's Newcastle – Provides free practical and emotional support for people with cancer.

North Tyneside Macmillan Support Centre – Offers information, counselling, and practical help.

Northern Centre for Cancer Care (NCCC), Newcastle – A specialist cancer centre offering treatment and support.

By raising awareness and encouraging early detection, we can help improve survival rates and provide better support for those affected by ovarian cancer.

Related Links

- [Target Ovarian Cancer](#)
- [Ovarian Cancer Action](#)
- [NHS Information on Ovarian Cancer](#)
- [Maggie's Newcastle](#)
- [North Tyneside Macmillan Support Centre](#)
- [Northern Centre for Cancer Care \(NCCC\), Newcastle](#)



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