Help the Foundation for Women’s Cancer Spread the Word
Please consider a donation to the Foundation for Women’s Cancer to help us reach more women with these important messages.
You can donate online at foundationforwomenscancer.org, contact Headquarters at 312.578.1439 or info@foundationforwomenscancer.org.
If you suspect, or have been diagnosed with ovarian cancer or another gynecologic cancer (i.e. cervical, uterine, vaginal or vulvar cancer), you should seek care first from a gynecologic oncologist.

A gynecologic oncologist is a board-certified obstetrician/gynecologist who has completed three to four years of specialized training in treating gynecologic cancers from an American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology-approved fellowship program. This subspecialty program provides training in the biology and pathology of gynecologic cancers, as well as in all forms of treatment for these diseases, including surgery, radiation, chemotherapy and research trials.

Data continues to confirm that women who are treated first by a gynecologic oncologist for ovarian cancer experience better outcomes.

Genetic Counseling and Testing
Genetic counselors are certified health care professionals with specialized graduate training in the areas of medical genetics and counseling. They are somewhat like family tree detectives who can advise if you need to consider genetic testing depending upon what they learn from you and your family history.

Genetic testing is a blood test or saliva test. This test can determine if you test positive for one of these mutations cannot predict that you will develop cancer. They can only tell you that you are at a higher risk for developing a cancer like ovarian cancer.

Steps to Take If You Test Positive for Either the BRCA1 or BRCA2 Gene
• Have a gynecologic exam one to two times each year.
• Have both an annual mammogram and breast MRI beginning at age 25.
• Have both a transvaginal ultrasound and CA125 test two times per year starting at age 30–35 until the ovaries and fallopian tubes are removed preventively after childbearing.
• Talk to your doctor immediately if you experience any of the ovarian cancer symptoms described in this brochure on a daily basis for 2–3 weeks.

The Option of Preventive Surgery
For women determined to be at the highest risk for developing ovarian cancer, preventive surgery to remove the ovaries and the fallopian tubes is the most effective method for prevention of ovarian cancer. This step can reduce the risk of ovarian cancer by 85–90% in some cases, and can reduce the risk of developing breast cancer.

Surgery however, is an important and personal choice. For pre-menopausal women, this will result in premature menopause. It can also have an impact on many aspects of your life, so it should be discussed with a gynecologic surgeon who specializes in ovarian/gynecologic cancer called a gynecologic oncologist, your family and others whose opinion you value.

Ovarian Cancer Symptoms
Symptoms associated with ovarian cancer are often non-specific and subclinical and are often experienced by women without ovarian cancer. This is one reason why detecting ovarian cancer is difficult. Recent studies, however, have shown that the following symptoms are much more likely to occur in women with ovarian cancer than in the general population.

• Bloating
• Pelvic or abdominal pain
• Difficulty eating or feeling full quickly
• Urinary symptoms (urgency or frequency)

Women with ovarian cancer report that symptoms are persistent and represent a change from normal for their bodies. Listen to Your Body.

Occasionally experiencing any of these symptoms is, of course, normal for most women and does not mean you have ovarian cancer. But if you experience any of these symptoms that are not normal for you, almost daily for 2–3 weeks, talk to your doctor, preferably a gynecologist.

The frequency and/or number of such symptoms are key factors in the diagnosis of ovarian cancer. Several studies show that even early stage ovarian cancer can produce these symptoms.