



**EVERYBODY BENEFITS:** EMPLOYEE GUIDE

# Gynae cancer. Let's take a closer look.



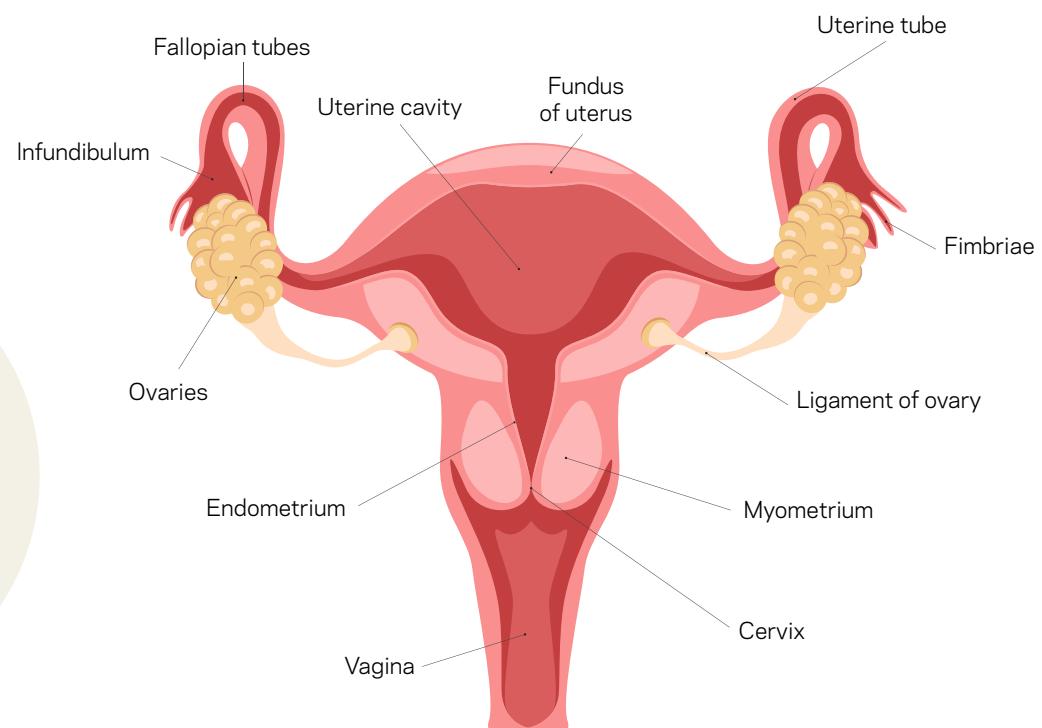


**22,050**  
women and people  
with gynae organs are  
diagnosed with gynae  
cancers every year  
in the UK

# The 5Cs: womb, ovaries, cervix, vulva and vagina

Knowing your own body intimately - inside and out - what looks and feels normal and what doesn't is the first step to spotting many cancer symptoms. Gynaecological cancers are no different.

But let's be honest, it's not a part of our body we see every day, is it? So, let's remind ourselves what's what and where...



# Talking about down there needs to be out there

Thanks to celebrities and charities encouraging us to CoppaFeel, we're now bold and brave about checking our breasts.

So, isn't it about time we became less prudish about checking our privates? We should all be proud of our bodies - from our head to our toes and everything in between - including sexual organs and reproductive systems.

**When 60 people are diagnosed and 21 dying every day in the UK from gynaecological cancers, now is the time to discuss without shame or stigma.**

**Get checked out!**

The five gynaecological cancers - **womb, ovarian, cervical, vulval and vaginal** - can affect women and all people with gynae organs who have been through

gender reassignment surgery or identify as non-binary (or both).

But awareness of the signs and symptoms of these cancers is very low.

That's why it's crucial to encourage people to become more aware about their bodies, their risk factors and how to embrace preventative measures or life changing habits.

**Abnormal bleeding** is a symptom of three out of the five gynaecological cancers: womb, cervical and vaginal.<sup>1</sup>

But **80% of people do not see their GP to get an unexpected vaginal bleed checked out.**<sup>2</sup> It often turns out to be something less serious like stress, PMS or IBS, but it's better to be safe than sorry.

<sup>1</sup> <https://eveappeal.org.uk/information-and-advice/looking-after-your-gynae-health/tips-for-tracking-your-bleeding/>

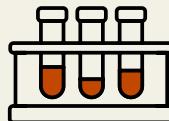
<sup>2</sup> [https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/what-is-abnormal-vaginal-bleeding-survey-finds-most-women-wouldnt-get-it-checked\\_uk\\_5f4e06a1c5b6cf66b2bcc72f](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/what-is-abnormal-vaginal-bleeding-survey-finds-most-women-wouldnt-get-it-checked_uk_5f4e06a1c5b6cf66b2bcc72f)

21

people die every day from their diagnosis

Here we give an overview of each of the five gynae cancers and outline the specific symptoms to be aware of for each.

## Cervical cancer



Cancer of the cervix is most common between the ages of

**30-34<sup>3</sup>**



Around **3,250** women are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year<sup>4</sup>

Our UK cervical screening programme saves over **5,000** lives each year<sup>5</sup>

### Symptoms

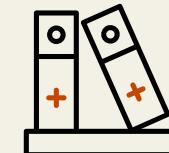
- Unusual vaginal bleeding that often occurs after having sex
- Bleeding at any time other than your expected monthly period
- Bleeding between periods
- Periods being much heavier or more painful than normal
- Pain and discomfort during sex
- Unpleasant smelling vaginal discharge
- Bleeding after the menopause
- Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

## Womb



Womb cancer is the most common gynaecological cancer with around

**10,000** cases in the UK every year<sup>6</sup>



Womb cancer is the **fourth** most common cancer in women after breast, lung and bowel<sup>7</sup>

### Symptoms

- Abnormal or irregular vaginal bleeding – especially after the menopause
- Bleeding between periods
- Bleeding that is unusually heavy
- Vaginal discharge that is blood-stained

<sup>3</sup> <https://eveappeal.org.uk/information-and-advice/gynaecological-cancers/cervical-cancer>

<sup>4</sup> <https://eveappeal.org.uk/information-and-advice/gynaecological-cancers/cervical-cancer>

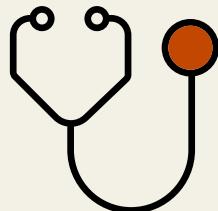
<sup>5</sup> <https://eveappeal.org.uk/information-and-advice/gynaecological-cancers/cervical-cancer>

<sup>6</sup> <https://peachestrust.org/womb-cancer/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/cancer/cancer-types-in-adults/womb-uterus-cancer>

## Ovarian

Ovarian is the 6th most common cancer in women, with about

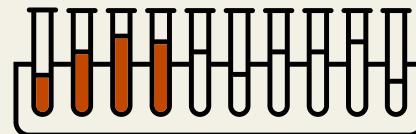


**7,500**  
diagnosed every year<sup>8</sup>

### Symptoms

- Increased abdominal size and persistent bloating
- Persistent pelvic and abdominal pain
- Unexplained change in bowel habits
- Difficulty eating and feeling full quickly
- Feeling nauseous
- Needing to urinate more regularly

## Vulvar



More than

**4 in 10** vulval cancers are linked to Human Papillomavirus (HPV)<sup>9</sup>

### Symptoms

- A lasting vulval itch
- Pain or soreness around the vulva
- Thickened, raised, red, lighter or darker patches on the skin of the vulva
- An open sore or growth visible on the skin
- A mole on the vulva that changes shape or colour
- A lump or swelling on the vulva

8 <https://ovarian.org.uk/hereditary-cancer-and-risk/im-healthcare-professional>

9 <https://eveappeal.org.uk/gynaecological-cancers/vulvar-cancer>

## Vaginal

Vaginal cancer is very rare - approximately



**250**  
cases are diagnosed in the UK every year<sup>10</sup>

### Symptoms

- Unexpected vaginal bleeding
- Vaginal discharge that smells
- Blood-stained vaginal discharge
- Vaginal pain during sexual intercourse
- A vaginal lump or growth that you or your doctor can feel
- A constant vaginal itch
- Pain when urinating
- Persistent pelvic and vaginal pain

10 <https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/vaginal-cancer>

# Prevention measures for gynaecological cancers

## Smear tests

All women and people with a cervix between the ages of 25-64 years are invited by the NHS to attend cervical screening which can detect the HPV or abnormal cells in the cervix before they develop into cancer.

If you are between 25 and 49 years you should have a smear test every 3 years, or every 5 years aged 50 to 64.<sup>11</sup> Cervical screening will usually stop at the age of 65 years unless you have previously had abnormal smears.<sup>12</sup>

You can also book a smear test, cervical cancer check or mammogram privately, either as an additional option during a general private health screening or as a standalone service.

## HPV vaccinations

Those most at risk of developing cervical, vaginal and vulvar cancer are those infected with HPV.<sup>13</sup> However, it is very important to remember that the majority of people with HPV do not develop cancer and in most cases your own immune system will help you clear the HPV.

The HPV vaccine is available to boys and girls in school from ages 12-13 years in the UK<sup>14</sup> (age 11-13 in Scotland).<sup>15</sup>

## Quit smoking

Smoking can weaken your immune system and reduce the ability of your body to clear HPV.

## Genetic testing

Family history, including BRCA 1 and 2 genes, can increase the risk of ovarian cancer so you may wish to be genetically tested so that you can make informed decisions and possibly have preventative treatment.

## Living an all-round healthier lifestyle

We are all aware that small lifestyle changes can make a big difference to help prevent all forms of cancer and other life-threatening illnesses.

### We should all...

- Exercise more
- Quit smoking
- Eat a healthy diet rich in fruit and vegetables
- Drink less alcohol

11 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/cervical-screening-programme-overview>

12 <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cervical-screening-when-youll-be-invited>

13 <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/cervical-cancer/risks-causes>

14 <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-screening/cervical-screening/cervical-screening-programmes>

15 <https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/immunisation/vaccines/hpv-vaccine/>





**60**  
people receive the life-changing news that they have a gynae cancer every day

# Support is out there

## The Eve Appeal

The Eve Appeal is a specialist charity dedicated to researching gynaecological cancers and providing an invaluable source of support.

Call their helpline on **0808 802 0019**

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

## Wellbeing of Women

This women's gynaecological and reproductive health charity offers a wealth of easy-to-understand information explaining the symptoms and conditions that affect lots of women.

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

## Macmillan Cancer Support

Helpline: **0808 808 00 00**

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

## Cancer Research UK

Nurse helpline: 0808 800 4040

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

## Transgender or non-binary screening information

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

## HPV explained

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)



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**0800 389 7723** (Monday to Friday)

### Head office address

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