

Are you at risk of familial cancer?

WHAT IS FAMILIAL CANCER? HEALTHWISE TALKED TO THE DOCTORS AT ASCOT CENTRAL WOMEN'S CLINIC TO FIND OUT HOW IT MAY AFFECT YOU OR SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU.

Familial cancer is cancer that occurs in families more often than would be expected by chance. It is usually caused by a gene mutation that increases the risk of cancer.

With regard to ovarian cancer the commonest cause of the familial type is BRCA1 and BRCA2 gene mutations, while for endometrial cancer HNPCC



Screening to identify early cancer or pre-cancer is available for breast and endometrial cancer.

is the commonest cause (also known as Lynch syndrome).

Which types of cancer fall into the familial category?

In the field of gynaecology both ovarian and endometrial cancers may be familial, but familial cancers make up only a small proportion of these cancers overall.

Breast cancer may also be familial.

What is your advice for women with a family history of cancer?

If you think you may be at risk of developing a familial cancer (because of your family history) it is worthwhile discussing your concerns with your family doctor. It may be necessary to be referred to a gynaecologist or geneticist for a more detailed assessment and possibly genetic testing. If it is determined that

there is a substantial risk of familial cancer developing then either screening or prophylactic surgery can be offered. Screening to identify early cancer or pre-cancer is available for breast and endometrial cancer but unfortunately is not useful for ovarian cancer. For breast cancer, mammography is a worthwhile form of screening. For endometrial cancer screening can be done by a combination of sampling the lining of the uterus (endometrium) and ultrasound.

Ovarian cancer cannot be reliably identified with screening and for women at high risk of developing this cancer prophylactic surgery to remove the ovaries and fallopian tubes may be appropriate.

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The right doctor can make all the difference!

If your family doctor has diagnosed or even suspects you have a gynaecological cancer – it is important to ensure you have the right doctor to take care of you from the start of your treatment – make sure an appointment is made to see a gynaecological oncologist.

Gynaecological oncology is a sub-specialty of gynaecology. After completion of general obstetrics and gynaecology specialist training, the doctor completes an additional three years of training. This includes advanced surgery of the female genital system, bowel and urinary tract as well as training in chemotherapy and radiation therapy. The doctor is then required to sit and pass an examination set by

the Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology to obtain a Certificate in Gynaecological Oncology (CGO). Recertification every three years is compulsory.

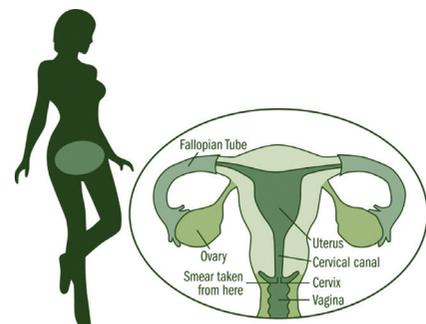
This means a gynaecological oncologist is a very skilled surgeon capable of performing complex, wide ranging surgery. They also understand the impact of cancer and treatment has on all aspects of a woman's life. Overseas studies have shown that receiving your initial surgery from a gynaecological oncologist for gynaecological cancers can significantly improve long term outcomes for women.

Ascot Central Women's Clinic of New Zealand

For all pre malignant and malignant gynaecological cancers

Working together in close collaboration with radiation and medical oncologists, pathologists and radiologists the team at the Women's Cancer Centre provides a comprehensive range of diagnosis, treatment, follow up care and ongoing management for women of all ages who are suspected of having pre malignant or malignant gynaecological cancers involving the:

- cervix
- endometrium
- fallopian tube
- ovary
- uterus (womb)
- vagina
- vulva



For more information, please visit us at:

www.ascotwomensclinic.co.nz

COMPASSIONATE AND COMPETENT CARE