

UTERINE CANCER

What is it?

Cancer of the uterus involves abnormal cellular changes of the endometrium which is the lining of the uterus. It is mostly seen in postmenopausal women between 50 and 60 years of age. Among cancers of the female reproductive tract, adenocarcinoma of the endometrium is the most common but also has the best overall survival rate. The exact cause is uncertain but there are factors that put a woman at increased risk for developing uterine cancer. A family history of ovarian or breast cancer is one risk factor. Others include estrogen use without added progesterone (unopposed estrogen), late menopause, diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, personal history of hormonal imbalance, uterine polyps, personal history of breast or colon cancer, giving birth to few or no children and lack of ovulation. If not treated, uterine cancer will most likely spread to nearby organs such as the rectum and bladder and then to other distant organs. Because a patient with uterine cancer is at increased risk for breast cancer, a mammogram should always be obtained.

Signs and symptoms:

- * Painless postmenopausal vaginal bleeding or spotting, especially after intercourse. Any abnormal bleeding should be reported to your doctor.
- * Premenopausal or perimenopausal menstrual irregularities and spotting between periods.
- * A watery, blood-tinged discharge may precede the bleeding.
- * Uterus sometimes enlarges to where it can be palpated through the abdomen.
- * Spread of the cancer to other parts of the body causing various signs and symptoms such as abdominal or chest pain, weight loss, fatigue, anemia and swollen lymph glands.

Call the office if you have bleeding that soaks more than one pad or tampon per hour or if you have chills, fever, fatigue, headache or muscle aches.