

In the United States, there are estimated to be more than 233,000 women living with ovarian cancer and more than 3,700,000 living with breast cancer, with varied outcomes of morbidity and mortality. Screening and diagnostic testing for breast and ovarian cancer can lead to earlier detection of disease, improved health outcomes, and reduced health disparities among women.

OVARIAN CANCER

Though not the most common cancer, ovarian cancer—a cancer originating in the ovaries, fallopian tubes, or peritoneum—causes more deaths than any other gynecologic cancer, specifically ranking [fifth in cancer deaths](#) among women. A [woman's risk](#) of getting ovarian cancer during her lifetime is **1 in 78**, and her lifetime chance of dying from ovarian cancer is **1 in 108**.



While many women get ovarian cancer without being high risk, there are [risk factors](#) that can increase a woman's risk of getting ovarian cancer, including:

- Age ([most ovarian cancers](#) develop after menopause)
- Family history
- Genetic mutations (e.g., BRCA1, BRCA2)*
- Fertility treatment
- Having endometriosis

**Some people—including those with relatives with breast or ovarian cancer and those of Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry—have a [higher risk for a BRCA gene mutation](#) than others.*

INCIDENCE OF OVARIAN CANCER AMONG WOMEN (PER 100,00)*

12.2 White

10.6 Hispanic

9.5 Asian/Pacific Islander

9.4 Black

**Non-white women have been underrepresented in epidemiological ovarian cancer studies.*

Source: [Racial/Ethnic Differences in the Epidemiology of Ovarian Cancer: A Pooled Analysis of 12 Case-Control Studies](#)

BREAST CANCER

Breast cancer occurs when cells in the breast grow abnormally—dividing and multiplying unmanageably. While breast cancer occurs in both men and women, breast cancer occurs disproportionately in women—specifically, [100 times greater](#) in women than men. Breast cancer ranks [second in cancer deaths](#) among women. A woman's risk of developing breast cancer in her lifetime is **1 in 8**.

A combination of factors can lead to an [increased risk](#) for breast cancer. These include:

- Biological sex
- Age ([most breast cancers](#) are diagnosed after age 50)
- Genetic mutations (e.g., BRCA1, BRCA2)*
- Family history of breast or ovarian cancer
- Having dense breasts
- Personal history of breast cancer or breast disease

Other risk factors include reproductive history, obesity, lack of physical activity, previous exposure to radiation therapy, and alcohol consumption.

**Some people—including those with relatives with breast or ovarian cancer and those of Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry—have a [higher risk](#) for a BRCA gene mutation than others.*

RATE OF NEW BREAST CANCERS BY RACE AND ETHNICITY (PER 100,000)

130.3 White

125.4 Black

103.1 Asian/Pacific Islander

101.9 Hispanic

73.1 American Indian/
Alaska Native

Source: [Leading Cancers by Age, Race, Sex, and Ethnicity, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

SCREENING AND DIAGNOSTIC TESTS FOR OVARIAN AND BREAST CANCER SCREENING

Screening Tests for Ovarian Cancer:

Currently, there are no recommended screening guidelines for ovarian cancer, so it is challenging for women to get the benefit of early detection for this disease. Women are encouraged to be mindful of ovarian cancer symptoms and raise concerns with their providers if there are new or frequent symptoms, or if symptoms become more severe over time. Symptoms may include bloating, pelvic or abdominal pain, trouble eating, or urinary symptoms (e.g., urgency, frequency).

The National Comprehensive Cancer Network's Guidelines for Patients on Ovarian Cancer can be found [here](#).

Screening Tests for Breast Cancer*:

- Mammography
- Clinical breast exams
- Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends women ages 50–74 get a screening mammogram every other year (an overview of various screening guidelines can be found [here](#)). However, screening needs may vary given an individual's risk factors for developing the disease.

**Breast cancer screening cannot prevent cancer, but it can help detect breast cancer early, when it's easier to treat and less likely to have spread*

Diagnostic Tests for Ovarian Cancer*:

- Transvaginal ultrasound (TVUS)
- CA-125 blood test
- Biopsy and pathology

**According to the American Cancer Society (ACS), using these tests has not been proven to lower a woman's chances of dying from ovarian cancer. Visit the [ACS website](#) for more information about tests for ovarian cancer.*

Diagnostic Tests for Breast Cancer:

- Biopsy*

**Given the different types of breast cancer, biomarker tests will help classify the tumor and determine what type of breast cancer is present. These diagnostic tests help determine the proper course of treatment for an individual's breast cancer type.*

POLICY NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE BREAST AND OVARIAN CANCER OUTCOMES

- **Access to Quality Health Care.** Utilizing preventive and treatment measures for breast and ovarian cancer involves ensuring everyone has access to high-quality, evidence-based health care, including eliminating insurance barriers to screening and diagnostic tests and exams. [H.R. 2216, Jeanette Acosta Invest in Women's Health Act of 2021](#), is one piece of legislation that would provide women with increased access to preventive and life-saving cancer screening.
- **Continued Authorization of the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (NBCCEDP).** [NBCCEDP](#), a partnership between CDC and state health departments, provides life-saving breast and cervical cancer screening and diagnostic services to low-income, uninsured, or underinsured people in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, six territories, and 13 tribes or tribal organization.
- **Increased Federal Research Funding.** There remain ample opportunities to inform early detection, treatment, prevention, and survival of breast and ovarian cancers. Congress must continue to prioritize robust, sustained investments in cancer research.
- **Public Education and Awareness.** Ensuring the public is aware of cancer risk factors, recommended screening guidelines, and prevention strategies for cancer is essential for empowering women to take control of their own health care. Federal education and awareness campaigns are necessary to inform women about ovarian and breast cancers and services available to reduce the impact of these cancers.