

# ASCO ANSWERS

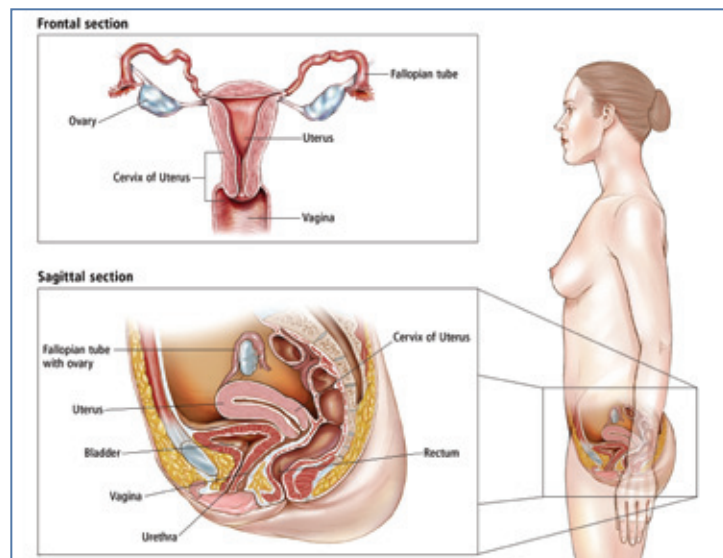
## UTERINE CANCER

### WHAT IS UTERINE CANCER?

Uterine cancer is a disease in which normal cells in the uterus begin to change, grow uncontrollably, and form a mass of cells called a tumor. Adenocarcinoma (also called endometrial cancer) begins in the lining of the uterus and is the most common type of uterine cancer. Uterine cancer is the most common cancer of a woman's reproductive system diagnosed in the United States.

### WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF THE UTERUS?

The pear-shaped uterus is located between a woman's bladder and rectum. Also called the womb, it is where a baby grows when a woman is pregnant. It has three sections: the cervix (the narrow, lower section), the corpus (the broad, middle section), and the fundus (the dome-shaped, top section). The inside of the uterus has two layers of tissue: endometrium (an inner layer) and myometrium (the outer layer of muscle tissue).



Find additional cancer information at [www.cancer.net](http://www.cancer.net).

### WHAT DOES STAGE MEAN?

The stage is a way of describing a cancer, such as where it is located, if or where it has spread, and if it is affecting the functions of other organs in the body. There are five stages for uterine cancer: stage 0 (zero) and stages I through IV (one through four). Illustrations for these stages are available at [www.cancer.net/uterine](http://www.cancer.net/uterine).

### HOW IS UTERINE CANCER TREATED?

The treatment of uterine cancer depends on the size and location of the tumor, whether the cancer has spread, and the woman's overall health. Surgery to remove the uterus and cervix usually is the first treatment. Sometimes, the ovaries and fallopian tubes may also be removed. Radiation therapy is most commonly given after surgery to destroy any remaining cancer cells or relieve side effects; it is rarely given before surgery to shrink or slow the growth of a tumor. Chemotherapy may be used to treat more advanced cancer. Hormone therapy with the sex hormone, progesterone, may be used for women who cannot have surgery or radiation therapy. When making treatment decisions, women may also consider a clinical trial; talk with your doctor about all treatment options. Most side effects of uterine cancer treatment can often be prevented or managed with the help of your health-care team.

### HOW CAN I COPE WITH UTERINE CANCER?

Absorbing the news of a cancer diagnosis and communicating with your doctor are key parts of the coping process. Seeking support, becoming organized, and considering a second opinion are other steps. Take care of yourself during this time. Understanding your emotions and those of people close to you can be helpful in managing the diagnosis, treatment, and healing process.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK THE DOCTOR

Regular communication is important in making informed decisions about your health care. Consider asking the following questions of your doctors:

- What type of uterine cancer do I have?
- Can you explain my pathology report (laboratory test results) to me?
- What stage is the uterine cancer?
- Has cancer spread to my lymph nodes or anywhere else?
- Would you explain my treatment options?
- What clinical trials are open to me?
- How will this treatment benefit me?
- How will this treatment affect my daily life? Will I be able to work, exercise, and perform my usual activities?
- Will this treatment affect my ability to become pregnant or have children?
- What is the expected timeline for my treatment plan?
- What long-term side effects may be associated with my cancer treatment?
- Where can I find emotional support for me and my family?
- Whom do I call for questions or problems?
- Is there anything else I should be asking?

Additional questions to ask the doctor can be found at [www.cancer.net/uterine](http://www.cancer.net/uterine).

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*Information in ASCO's patient education materials is not intended as medical advice or as a substitute for the treating doctor's own professional judgment; nor does it imply ASCO endorsement of any product, service, or company.*

*ASCO believes that all treatment decisions should be made between patients and their doctors.*

**For more information, visit ASCO's patient website,  
[www.cancer.net](http://www.cancer.net), or call 888-651-3038.**

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## TERMS TO KNOW

### **Benign:**

A tumor that is not cancerous

### **Biopsy:**

Removal of a tissue sample that is then examined under a microscope to check for cancer cells

### **Chemotherapy:**

The use of drugs to destroy cancer cells

### **Dilation & curettage (D&C):**

Removal of a tissue sample from the uterus

### **Fibroid:**

A noncancerous tumor in the uterine muscle

### **Hysterectomy:**

Removal of the uterus

### **Lymph node:**

A tiny, bean-shaped organ that fights infection

### **Malignant:**

A tumor that is cancerous

### **Metastasis:**

The spread of cancer from where the cancer began to another part of the body

### **Oncologist:**

A doctor who specializes in treating people with cancer

### **Prognosis:**

Chance of recovery

### **Radiation therapy:**

The use of high-energy x-rays to destroy cancer cells

### **Tumor:**

A mass of tissue that requires a biopsy