

# Legacy Health

## Ovarian cancer prevention and fallopian tube removal: Frequently asked questions

Ovarian cancer is one of the most feared cancers. Nearly 70% of cases have no cure. There is no effective screening test and no early prevention method—until now. New science has found that many ovarian cancers begin in the fallopian tubes. So, if fallopian tubes are removed during a routine gynecological or abdominal procedure, a woman's risk can be greatly reduced. That is why the Legacy Cancer Institute recommends that certain women consider fallopian tube removal to help prevent future ovarian cancer.

### **Who should consider preventive fallopian tube removal (salpingectomy)?**

- Women past their childbearing years who are having a hysterectomy or other pelvic or abdominal surgery
- Women choosing to have their “tubes tied” (tubal ligation)
- Women who have a known genetic risk for breast or ovarian cancer

### **What is salpingectomy?**

Salpingectomy is the removal of one or both of a woman's fallopian tubes. If performed with a laparoscope, this minimally invasive procedure can take less than 30 minutes and can be done through only a few tiny incisions. Recovery is rapid, and women can go back to their normal activities within a few days. If one is getting a salpingectomy during another routine procedure, it will only take an extra 10 minutes and there is no added recovery time.

### **Why is it believed ovarian cancer starts in the fallopian tubes?**

Pre-cancerous changes for serous ovarian cancer are found only in the fallopian tubes. This was first found in women with a genetic risk for ovarian cancer who had their tubes and ovaries removed to prevent the disease. Also, the earliest forms of ovarian cancer have been found only in the fallopian tubes, and not in the ovaries themselves.

### **Are there any risks from fallopian tube removal?**

There are no downsides to removing the fallopian tubes once a woman has completed childbearing. The fallopian tubes' only purpose is to transport the egg and sperm to begin a pregnancy. There will be no change in menstruation or hormones, because the ovaries are not removed.

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**Does removal of the fallopian tubes cause a woman to have early menopause?**

No. With a salpingectomy, the ovaries are not removed, so hormone levels are not affected. Leaving the ovaries in place is beneficial. It not only prevents early surgical menopause, it also reduces a woman's risk for later problems related to the heart, bones, etc.

**How much can salpingectomy reduce the risk of cancer?**

Salpingectomy will not eliminate all cases of ovarian cancer. However, it could lower the number of women who develop the most deadly form of ovarian cancer by more than 80% over the next 20 years.

**Are there options besides salpingectomy to prevent ovarian cancer?**

There is currently no good way to screen for or prevent ovarian cancer. Taking hormonal contraception (birth control) can lower the risk of ovarian cancer in some women.

**What questions should I ask my gynecologist?**

- What is my risk of ovarian cancer?
- What are my options to lower my ovarian cancer risk?
- What are the benefits and risks of each option?