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This National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, Learn the Four Symptoms to Watch For

LANSING, Mich. – In Michigan in 2017, it is estimated there will be 790 cases diagnosed, and 500 women will die from ovarian cancer. September is National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month and while ovarian cancer does not have a screening test and can be difficult to detect early, there are four symptoms that women should be on the lookout for.

Studies have shown that ovarian cancer is not silent, but the warning signs are subtle. 90 percent of women with ovarian cancer do report symptoms, even at the early stages. Four symptoms in particular have been found to occur most often.

If any of these symptoms are new and unusual and occur at least 12 times in one month, see a doctor, preferably a gynecologist: significant bloating, pelvic and abdominal pain, difficulty eating or feeling full quickly, and urinary symptoms such as feelings of frequency or urgency. Behaviors which may decrease the risk of ovarian cancer include: use of oral contraceptives (birth control pills), the surgical removal of fallopian tubes and/or ovaries, and breastfeeding.

Additionally, several factors may increase the risk of ovarian cancer:

- Personal or family history of ovarian, breast, uterine, or colorectal cancer.
 - About 20-25 percent of ovarian cancer is hereditary. Any female who has been diagnosed with ovarian cancer should be referred to a genetic counselor.
- Increased number of menstrual cycles in a lifetime (never had children, late menopause, etc.)
- Infertility, regardless of whether or not fertility drugs were used.
- Use of Hormone Replacement Therapy.
- Increasing age, although ovarian cancer affects all ages and all ethnic groups.
- Obesity, like many health conditions, can contribute to one's risk of ovarian cancer.

Because there is no screening test, only 10 to 15 percent of ovarian cancers are diagnosed early when treatment is most effective. Knowing your body and what symptoms to watch for is vital to detecting ovarian cancer as early as possible.

For more information about ovarian cancer, [click here](#) or visit www.michigan.gov/cancer.

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