



Endometrial Cancer: Causes, Symptoms, Diagnosis, and Treatment

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Description

Endometrial cancer is a type of cancer that affects the lining of the uterus, called the endometrium. It is the most common type of uterine cancer and primarily affects postmenopausal women. By increasing awareness and understanding of this condition, aim to promote early detection, effective treatment, and improved outcomes for those affected by endometrial cancer. Endometrial cancer arises when the cells in the lining of the uterus undergo abnormal changes and begin to multiply uncontrollably. The exact cause of endometrial cancer is unknown, but certain risk factors have been identified. These include obesity, hormonal imbalances, such as an excess of estrogen relative to progesterone, diabetes, hypertension, a history of endometrial hyperplasia, and a family history of certain cancers.

Symptoms of endometrial cancer

Symptoms and warning signs early-stage endometrial cancer may not produce noticeable symptoms. However, as the disease progresses, women may experience the following warning signs.

Abnormal vaginal bleeding: The most common symptom of endometrial cancer is abnormal vaginal bleeding. This may include postmenopausal bleeding, heavy or prolonged menstrual bleeding, or bleeding between periods.

Pelvic pain: Persistent pelvic pain, discomfort, or a feeling of pressure in the pelvic region may occur.

Changes in urination: Some women may experience changes in urination, such as increased frequency or pain during urination.

Unexplained weight loss: Unintentional weight loss without changes in diet or physical activity can be a symptom of advanced endometrial cancer.

Diagnosis and staging

If endometrial cancer is suspected, several diagnostic tests may be performed:

Transvaginal ultrasound: This imaging test uses sound waves to produce images of the uterus and can help determine the thickness of the endometrium and identify any abnormalities.

Endometrial biopsy: In this procedure, a small sample of tissue is taken from the lining of the uterus and examined under a microscope to check for cancer cells.

Hysteroscopy: A thin, lighted tube (hysteroscope) is inserted into the uterus through the vagina and cervix to visually examine the uterus and collect tissue samples for biopsy.

Imaging tests: Imaging techniques such as Computed Tomography (CT) scans or Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) may be used to determine the extent of the cancer and whether it has spread to other areas. Once endometrial cancer is diagnosed, staging is done to determine the extent of the disease. This helps guide treatment decisions. The stages range from I to IV, with stage I being confined to the uterus and stage IV indicating the cancer has spread to distant organs.

Treatment

Treatment for endometrial cancer depends on the stage and characteristics of the tumor, as well as the woman's overall health and preferences. The primary treatment for endometrial cancer is usually a hysterectomy, which involves the removal of the uterus and often the fallopian tubes and ovaries. Lymph nodes in the pelvis and abdomen may also be removed to check for spread. In some cases, minimally invasive surgery, such as laparoscopic or robotic-assisted surgery, may be possible. Radiation therapy uses high-energy beams to target and kill cancer cells. It may be used before surgery to shrink tumors, after surgery to kill remaining cancer cells.

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