

# Women's wellness: researchers look at post menopause as key factor in endometrial cancer

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Endometrial cancer is the most common gynecological malignancy in the U.S. and the fourth most common cancer among women. In addition, endometrial cancer incidence rates are on the rise in the western world, suggesting that alterations in environmental factors such as diet, lifestyle, and the vaginal microbiome may be important drivers in its cause.

In a study published in *Scientific Reports* Mayo Clinic researchers identified a microbiome signature associated with endometrial cancer, which is in part promoted by post menopause. The goal of the study was to understand how endometrial cancer risk factors alter the reproductive tract microbiome and endometrial cancer risk.

"If the microbiome does play a role in endometrial cancer, beyond being a marker for it, this could have important implications for endometrial cancer prevention," says Marina Walther-Antonio, Ph.D., lead author of the Mayo Clinic study.

According to Dr. Walther-Antonio the established role of the [vaginal microbiome](#) as a key factor in vaginal and obstetric health, as well as vaginal microbiome differences found between different ethnicities adds to the importance of exploring the microbiome in endometrial cancer.

The research team previously found microbiome differences between patients with and without endometrial cancer in a uterine microbiome study published in 2017 that led to the development of a vaginal swab screening methodology used for endometrial cancer."

"The new study gave us the knowledge and application needed to further develop this screening tool for endometrial cancer," says Dr. Walther-Antonio.

Dr. Walther-Antonio and researchers are currently investigating the role of the microbiome in endometrial cancer and potentially how to prevent the actions of harmful bacteria to the host.

Overall, the team verified the main known risk factors for endometrial cancer (postmenopausal status and obesity) and identified high vaginal pH as an additional factor associated with patients with endometrial [cancer](#).

"We have determined that all of these factors impact the reproductive tract [microbiome](#), further identified post menopause as a key factor, and are looking ahead to discuss potential translational applications of this knowledge, which may bring new approaches to address current health disparities in [endometrial cancer](#)," says Dr. Walther-Antonio.

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