

Women's wellness: Three tips for gynecologic cancer awareness

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Gynecologic cancers start in a woman's reproductive organs. The five main types are cervical, endometrial, ovarian, vaginal and vulvar cancer.

Every five minutes, a woman is diagnosed with a gynecologic [cancer](#), according to the Foundation for Women's Cancer. And of the estimated 90,000 [women](#) in the U.S. who are diagnosed, more than 33,000 will die from these diseases.

September is Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Month, a nationwide effort to educate women about [screening](#) and prevention.

Dr. Amanika Kumar, a Mayo Clinic OB-GYN, says women can do several things to reduce their risk for [gynecologic cancers](#), including staying up to date on screenings and being aware of any unusual signs or symptoms.

"Each cancer is a bit different and women of all ages may be affected based on different factors, including age, [family history](#) and genetics," says Dr. Kumar. "But I tell my patients that the most important this is to be mindful of living a [healthy lifestyle](#), including maintaining a normal body weight."

Dr. Kumar, says that research shows that eating a healthy diet and exercising have been shown to reduce the risk of many cancers.

Staying up to date screenings, including yearly physical exams, is also important.

"Screening guidelines are often being updated. So whether or not you visit a gynecologist or other [health care provider](#), it is valuable to talk with your provider about what tests may be timely, such as such as HPV tests and Pap smears for cervical cancer. But I would still recommend women have a physical exam that may include a pelvic exam," says Dr.

Kumar.

Dr. Kumar also suggests that women be mindful of any unusual symptoms or signs and seek evaluation from a health care provider.

"Things like abnormal bleeding, or bloating and early satiety, are all symptoms of a cancer as is postmenopausal bleeding. But having one of these symptoms does not mean you have cancer," she says.

"Early detection is important so if you have a concern, it is important to go to your doctor or go to your health care practitioner for an evaluation."

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