

# Overview of Women Related Cancers

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## Abstract

In India, around 5.8 lakhs new cases of cancer are diagnosed in women in 2018. The incidence of breast cancer accounts for 25-32% of all female cancers. 90% of women diagnosed with breast cancer do not have a family history of cancers. Cervix cancer is the second most cancer and accounted 16.5% of newly diagnosed cancer cases in women in the year 2018. Ovarian Cancer is the third leading cancer and accounted for about 6.2% of all cancers among women in our country. India has more than 50% of all the cancers diagnosed in women. They are mostly found in breasts (27.7%), cervix uteri (16.5%), ovary (6.2%) and colorectum (3.4%).

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**Citation:** Lopez AP (2020) Overview of Women Related Cancers. J Womens Health Care Manage, Volume 1:1. 101. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47275/2692-0948-101>.

**Received:** January 06, 2020; **Accepted:** January 22, 2020; **Published:** January 27, 2020

## Introduction

Women have emerged winners in balancing home and work. But in the zeal to be the best mother, sister, daughter, wife, friend, colleague, she often lets her well-being and health take a back seat and sometimes it costs her and her dear ones dearly [1,2].

The negligence and ignorance are causing a growing number of women to lose the battle to cancer. Early detection can help more women win the battle against cancer. The biggest challenge is education and awareness about check-ups [3,4].

There is a rising incidence of cancers in India. Breast, cervix, ovarian, uterine and colorectal cancer together account for more than 50% of cancers in women. Many of these cancers can be detected early and are highly curable in early stages. Therefore, it is important to step up and educate our community about cancers in women. Cancer awareness and early detection programs will save lives [5].

## Common Cancers in Women

In India, around 5.8 lakhs new cases of cancer were diagnosed in women in 2018. The really positive message is that by knowing how you can reduce your risk and spot the early signs of cancer you can protect yourself from being one of these numbers.

## Breast Cancer

### Facts

- In India, Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women.
- It accounts for a quarter of all cancers diagnosed in a woman.
- Data shows that women in India are diagnosed at a younger age compared to west.
- 90% of women diagnosed with breast cancer do not have a family history of cancers.

## Possible symptoms

Lump or thickened area of the breast, discharge from either of the nipples, change to the size or shape of breast or nipple, skin irritation or dimpling on the skin of the breast, nipple retraction, breast or nipple pain, breast skin appears red and scaly [6].

## Risk factors

Being obese/overweight, hereditary/family history of breast cancer, dense breasts, alcohol consumption, more years of menstruation, never been pregnant.

## Cervical Cancer

### Facts

- Cervical cancer is the second most cancer in India in women.
- Cervix cancer accounted 16.5% of newly diagnosed cancer cases in women in the year 2018.
- It can be detected early by Pap smear examinations.
- Early stage Cervix cancer is curable.
- Cervical Cancer vaccines are very effective in the prevention of cervix cancer.

## Possible symptoms

Abnormal vaginal bleeding, pain and discomfort during sex, unusual or unpleasant vaginal discharge, pain in the lower back or pelvis, painful urination.

## Risk factors

Early onset of sexual activity (before age of 21), multiple sexual partners, high risk sexual partner human papillomavirus (HPV)



infection, immune system deficiency, genital Herpes, smoking and low socio-economic factors.

## Ovarian Cancer

### Facts

- It is the third leading cancer in women in India [7].
- Ovarian Cancer accounted for about 6.2% of all cancers among women in our country.
- Patients usually present with vague symptoms and this cancer is usually detected at a late stage.

### Possible symptoms

Abnormal vaginal bleeding, abdominal bloating, indigestion or nausea, pain and pressure in lower back or pelvis, frequent urination, change in bowel movements, changes in menstruation, loss of appetite, weight and fatigue.

### Risk factors

Older age, genetic factors, being overweight or obese, endometriosis.

## Uterine Cancer

### Facts

- The incidence of uterine cancers in India is very low.
- Post-menopausal bleeding is the most common symptom of uterine cancer and should not be ignored.
- Early stage uterine cancer is highly curable.

### Possible symptoms

Abnormal, heavy or irregular menstruation, pain and discomfort during intercourse, unusual or unpleasant vaginal discharge (foul smelling, pus-like or blood tinged), pelvic pain or pressure, painful urination, loss of appetite, weight loss, painful bowel movements, bleeding from bladder or rectum [8,9].

### Risk factors

Changes or imbalance in the female hormones, Increasing Age, being obese, genetics, family history (having endometrial or colorectal cancer), breast cancer treated with Tamoxifen, increased exposure to estrogen hormone, never been pregnant, more years of menstruation.

## Colorectal Cancer

### Facts

- Colorectal cancer accounts for about 3.9% of all cancers in women in India [10].
- The incidence of colorectal cancer in India is rising.

### Possible symptoms

Persistent change in bowel habits (narrow stools, constipation, diarrhoea, excessive bloating or gas), rectal bleeding or blood in stools, persistent abdominal discomfort, weakness or fatigue, unintended weight loss, cramping or abdominal pain.

### Risk factors

Increasing age, personal history of colorectal cancer or polyps, inflammatory intestinal conditions, inherited syndromes that causes increased risk of colon cancer, family history of colon cancer, low-fibre and high-fat diet, sedentary lifestyle, diabetes, obesity, smoking, alcohol consumption [11].

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