



## Ovarian Cancer Australia Symptom diary

[www.ovariancancer.net.au](http://www.ovariancancer.net.au)

**Ovarian Cancer Australia's Symptom diary is a tool that will help women to clearly communicate with their doctor about symptoms they are worried about and that may suggest ovarian cancer.**

The diary can be downloaded from [www.ovariancancer.net.au](http://www.ovariancancer.net.au) or you can pick up a copy from your nearest Chemmart® Pharmacy.

The Symptom diary is based on American and Australian research showing there are four key symptoms that are more frequent in women diagnosed with ovarian cancer.

### Who should use the Symptom diary?

The Symptom diary on the next page allows women to track their symptoms every day for 4 weeks. The diary will be especially helpful for women who experience any of the following symptoms more than 12 times during a 4-week period:

- Abdominal pain or pelvic (lower abdominal) pain that keeps coming back.
- A noticeable increase in abdominal size or abdominal bloating.
- Needing to rush to the toilet to urinate often or urgently.
- Feeling full quickly or finding it difficult to eat.

The Symptom diary will also be useful for women who have other unexplained, persistent symptoms – including changes in bowel habits, unexplained weight gain or loss, bleeding in-between periods or after menopause, back pain, indigestion, nausea or excessive fatigue.

Women who have already seen their doctor about these symptoms but are not feeling better will find it helpful to use the diary to present a clearer picture of what they are experiencing.

In all these situations, women and their doctors will find the Symptom diary a useful tool to work out how often the symptoms occur and how severe they are.

### What are the next steps?

Women should take their completed diary to their doctor and explain that they are concerned about ovarian cancer. The diary record will provide the doctor with a clear picture of symptoms.

The doctor will first rule out more common causes of these symptoms, but if there is no clear reason for the symptoms a woman is experiencing, the doctor needs to consider the possibility of ovarian cancer and should:

- Perform a pelvic examination.
- Arrange a transvaginal (internal) ultrasound.
- Order a CA125 blood test.

If any of these test results suggest that ovarian cancer is a possibility, it is essential that the woman is referred to a gynaecological oncologist as soon as possible.

### For women: top tips for communicating with your doctor

1. Clearly and confidently tell your doctor that you are worried about the possibility of ovarian cancer.
2. Make a list of your concerns before your doctor's visit (your mind can go blank when you feel under pressure).
3. With the help of your completed diary, describe your symptoms in as much detail as you can. It's especially helpful for your doctor to know when your symptoms started, how often you experience them and how severe they are.
4. Tell your doctor if anyone else on either side of your family has had breast, ovarian cancer or bowel cancer (ovarian cancer can sometimes run in families).
5. If you are not satisfied with your doctor's explanation for your symptoms, you should seek a second opinion until your doctor organises the necessary tests.

**Remember: You know your own body and what is normal or unusual for you.**

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*Adapted with permission from Ovarian Cancer Action UK*

**References:** Goff BA, Mandel LS, Drescher CW, Urban N, Gough S, Schurman KM, Patar J, Mahony BS, Andersen M. 'Development of an Ovarian Cancer Index: Possibilities for Earlier Detection' *CANCER*; 2007 Jan 15;109(2):221-7. Lataifeh I, Marsden DE, Robertson G, Gebiski V, Hacker NF. 'Presenting symptoms of epithelial ovarian cancer'. *Aust NZ J Obstet Gynecol*. 2005; 45:211-214.

## Using the Symptom diary

The diary allows you to track the four symptoms most associated with ovarian cancer every day for 4 weeks. Tick each day when you have had the symptom: so if you had stomach pain on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday in the first week, you would tick 'Pelvic/abdominal pain' for those days.

After you have monitored your symptoms for the 4 weeks you can also rate how mild or severe each symptom is by scoring it between 1 and 10 (10 is severe).



# Ovarian Cancer Australia Symptom diary

Please tick a box on each day that you experience symptoms

	Week one	Week two	Week three	Week four	Rate symptoms
<b>Pelvic/ abdominal pain</b>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>How would you rate your symptoms?</b> (1 is mild and 10 severe)  <b>Rate</b> <input type="text"/>
	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Friday <input type="checkbox"/>	Friday <input type="checkbox"/>	Friday <input type="checkbox"/>	Friday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Increased abdomen size/bloating</b>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>How would you rate your symptoms?</b> (1 is mild and 10 severe)  <b>Rate</b> <input type="text"/>
	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Friday <input type="checkbox"/>	Friday <input type="checkbox"/>	Friday <input type="checkbox"/>	Friday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Urinary frequency/ urgency</b>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>How would you rate your symptoms?</b> (1 is mild and 10 severe)  <b>Rate</b> <input type="text"/>
	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday <input type="checkbox"/>	
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	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Difficulty eating/ feeling full</b>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>How would you rate your symptoms?</b> (1 is mild and 10 severe)  <b>Rate</b> <input type="text"/>
	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/>	
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	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	Saturday <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday <input type="checkbox"/>	

### Additional symptoms & notes

Some women experience symptoms additional or different to the four key symptoms above. Tick the box next to any of the other symptoms listed here if you have experienced them in the last 4 weeks and note how frequent or severe they are.

You can also use the space here to describe how any of your symptoms are affecting your daily life, or to include anything else you want your doctor to know.

#### Symptom

#### How often?

#### How severe?

- Changes in your bowel habits
- Unexplained weight gain or loss
- Bleeding in-between periods or after menopause
- Back pain
- Indigestion or nausea
- Excessive fatigue