



**Medical
Blueprints**

BLACK WOMEN AND CANCER DISPARITIES REPORT #2844

BACKGROUND: Gynecologic cancers result from the rapid growth and spread of abnormal cells in a woman's reproductive system. Compared to other types of cancer (like breast or colon cancer), gynecologic cancers occur in about 100,000 women in the United States each year. The cancer is named for the part of the body where it starts. They start in different places within a woman's pelvis, which is the area below the stomach and in between the hip bones. All women are at risk for developing gynecologic cancers, and the risk increases with age. There are five major types of gynecological cancers: cervical cancer, uterine (endometrial) cancer, ovarian cancer, vaginal cancer, and vulvar cancer. It's important to know the warning signs, as treatments are most effective when the cancer is found at an early stage.

(Source: <https://www.yalemedicine.org/conditions/gynecological-cancers> and https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/gynecologic/basic_info/what-is-gynecologic-cancer.htm#:~:text=Gynecologic%20cancer%20is%20any%20cancer,in%20between%20the%20hip%20bones)

RACE AND CERVICAL CANCER: Approximately 2,000 African American women are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year, and more than 40 percent die from the disease. Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable types of cancer, and women can be screened for it with routine Pap tests. It is almost always caused by genital human papillomavirus (HPV) infection. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) now recommends that women begin cervical cancer screening at age 21, instead of three years after the onset of sexual activity, as previously recommended. Although cervical cancer occurs most often in Hispanic women, African American women tend to have lower 5-year survival rates and die more often than any other race. In fact, they have twice the cervical cancer mortality rate compared to white women. Early cervical cancer generally shows no signs or symptoms. This is why regular screening is so important.

(Source: <https://jacksonhealth.org/blog/2018-01-15-african-american-cervical-cancer/>)

GENETIC TESTING AND CANCER TREATMENT: Cancer treatments are increasingly being geared to the genetic signature of each patient's tumor, and the set of mutations and other abnormalities spurring the cancer's growth. Doctors estimate, in women's cancers, that genetic information now guides the treatment of about 10-20% of patients with metastatic disease. "We're applying what has been learned in laboratory science to create new treatment options for patients," says Ursula Matulonis, MD, chief of the Division of Gynecologic Oncology at Dana-Farber in Massachusetts. "Many of these options are available today, as standard therapies, and others are producing very promising results in clinical trials." The availability of targeted therapies means physicians can offer patients more personalized care.

(Source: <https://www.dana-farber.org/newsroom/publications/turning-point-2020/genetic-testing-helps-shape-some-cancer-treatments/>)

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