

Get involved

GRACE is always looking for volunteers to help raise much needed funds so it can continue its work and help more women living with gynaecological cancers. Here are some of the ways you can help:

Become a GRACE ambassador and tell your friends and family about our cause.

Host a fundraising event, such as a tea party, to raise funds for the charity.

Ask local businesses to make us their 'charitable partner'.

Take part in a local fun run or marathon.

Nominate us to local businesses with charitable giving schemes.

Donate your time and volunteer with GRACE.

Get in touch by emailing us at:
support@grace-charity.org.uk
or call us on: **01483 904153**

www.grace-charity.org.uk

GRACE exists to support women living with gynaecological cancers.

Our focus is on raising vital awareness to promote early diagnosis; fund desperately needed research into their causes and treatments; provide local hospitals with vital surgical equipment; and to offer and facilitate support to women who are diagnosed. We are dedicated to improving the overall well-being, treatment, recovery, and survival rates of all women diagnosed, now and in the future.

Around 60 women a day in the UK, are given the lifechanging news they have gynaecological cancer (22,000 women a year).

Help us give a lifeline to the women we love by donating today:



Or visit us online at **www.grace-charity.org.uk** to find out more.



@GraceWomen



Grace_women

Patron: Dame Judi Dench

GRACE, Department of Gynaecological Oncology, The Royal Surrey County Hospital, Egerton Road, Guildford, Surrey GU2 7XX

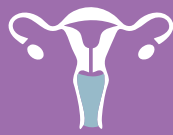
Information about Vaginal Cancer

Woman centred support | Research | Life-saving equipment



Offering hope and support
following a gynae cancer diagnosis

What Is Vaginal Cancer?



Vaginal cancer is a rare type of gynaecological cancer that starts in the vagina, the muscular tube connecting the womb to the outside of the body. Around 260 women in the UK are diagnosed with vaginal cancer each year.

Most vaginal cancers are found in women over 60, but it can occur at any age.

How Does it Develop?

Cancer happens when cells grow and multiply uncontrollably. Vaginal cancer often starts as pre-cancerous changes called **vaginal intraepithelial neoplasia (VAIN)**. Over time, these abnormal cells can develop into cancer.

The most common type is **squamous cell carcinoma**, which starts in the thin, flat cells lining the vagina. A less common type, **adenocarcinoma**, begins in the glandular cells of the vagina.

If untreated, vaginal cancer can spread to nearby tissues and other parts of the body.

Key Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms of vaginal cancer can be vague, but it's important to watch for:

- **Abnormal vaginal bleeding**, especially after sex, between periods, or after menopause.
- **Vaginal discharge** that is unusual in color or smell.
- **Pain during sex.**
- **A lump or mass** in the vagina that you can feel.
- **Persistent pelvic or vaginal pain.**
- **Difficulty passing urine or blood** in the urine.

If you notice any of these symptoms, see your GP for advice.

Risk Factors

The exact cause of vaginal cancer isn't always clear, but certain factors can increase your risk:

- **HPV Infection:** The human papillomavirus (HPV) is a common virus linked to vaginal cancer.
- **Age:** The risk increases with age, particularly after menopause.
- **Previous Cervical Cancer:** A history of cervical cancer can increase the risk.
- **Smoking:** Smoking can make it harder for the immune system to fight HPV.
- **Weakened Immune System:** Conditions or treatments that lower immunity can increase risk.
- **Previous Radiation Therapy:** Treatment for other pelvic cancers may increase the risk.

How is it Diagnosed?

To check for vaginal cancer, your GP or specialist may:

1. Ask about your symptoms and medical history.
2. Perform a pelvic examination to check for lumps or abnormal areas.
3. Take a small sample of tissue (biopsy) from the vagina for testing.
4. Use imaging tests like an MRI, CT scan, or ultrasound to look for cancer spread.

You might also have a colposcopy, where a specialist uses a magnifying instrument to closely examine the vagina.

Treatment

The treatment for vaginal cancer depends on the type, stage, and location of the cancer. Common treatments include:

1. **Surgery:** To remove cancerous tissue. This may include removing part of the vagina (partial vaginectomy) or, in more advanced cases, the entire vagina (total vaginectomy). Reconstructive surgery may be an option.
2. **Radiotherapy:** High-energy rays are used to destroy cancer cells, often used for localized cancer or alongside other treatments.
3. **Chemotherapy:** Drugs are used to destroy or shrink cancer cells. This may be used alone or with radiotherapy.

Your care team will explain your treatment plan in detail and provide support throughout.

Support and Next Steps

If you're diagnosed with vaginal cancer, your care team will provide support and advice tailored to you. This might include help from specialist nurses, counsellors, or support groups.

The GRACE charity also offers free one to one counselling and peer group support to any woman who has been diagnosed with a form of gynaecological cancer at any stage of their journey, from diagnosis through to life after recovery. For more information, visit **www.grace-charity.org.uk** or call **01483 904153**

For other information and support, visit:

- **Cancer Research UK**
- **Macmillan Cancer Support**

If you have concerns, contact your GP as soon as possible. Remember, early detection can make a big difference.

