

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 Vulval Cancer

Woman centred support | Research | Life-saving equipment



Offering hope and support following a gynae cancer diagnosis

What Is Vulval Cancer?



Vulval cancer is a rare type of gynaecological cancer that develops in the vulva, the outer part of the female genitalia. It affects around 1,300 women in the UK each year.

This type of cancer is most common in older women, particularly those over 65, but it can occur at any age.

Vulval cancer usually starts in the skin cells of the vulva, most often on the labia. It can also develop around the clitoris, in the perineum (the area between the vulva and anus), or in the Bartholin's glands.

How Does it Develop?

Cancer happens when cells in the body grow and multiply uncontrollably. In vulval cancer, these abnormal cells form in the tissues of the vulva, often starting as pre-cancerous changes called vulval intraepithelial neoplasia (VIN).

If not treated, these changes can progress to cancer and may spread to nearby areas like the lymph nodes, vagina, or anus.

Key Signs and Symptoms

The symptoms of vulval cancer can vary, but common signs include:

- A lump, sore, or thickened patch of skin on the vulva that doesn't heal.
- Persistent itching, pain, or tenderness in the vulval area.
- A change in the colour or texture of the vulval skin (e.g., red, white, or dark patches).
- Unusual bleeding or discharge not linked to your period.
- Pain during sex or when passing urine.
- Swelling or lumps in the groin area (enlarged lymph nodes).

If you notice any of these symptoms, it's important to see your GP.

Risk Factors

The exact cause of vulval cancer isn't fully understood, but some factors may increase your risk:

- **HPV Infection:** The human papillomavirus (HPV) is a common virus linked to vulval cancer.
- **Age:** The risk increases with age, especially after menopause.
- **Vulval Skin Conditions:** Conditions like lichen sclerosus can increase the risk if left untreated.
- **Smoking:** Smoking weakens the immune system, making it harder to fight off HPV.
- **Weakened Immune System:** Conditions or medications that suppress the immune system can raise the risk.

How is it Diagnosed?

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

1. Examine the vulva for changes in skin or lumps.
2. Take a small sample of tissue (biopsy) for testing.
3. Perform imaging tests like an ultrasound, MRI, or CT scan to check for cancer spread.

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

Treatment

Treatment for vulval cancer depends on the stage and location of the cancer. It often includes:

1. **Surgery:** To remove the cancerous tissue. This might include a vulvectomy (removal of part or all of the vulva) or lymph node removal in the groin.
2. **Radiotherapy:** High-energy rays are used to target and kill cancer cells.
3. **Chemotherapy:** Used in some cases, often alongside radiotherapy.

Your specialist team will explain the treatment options and support you throughout.

Support and Next Steps

If you're diagnosed with vulval 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.

