

ovacome..
ovarian cancer

Stage 1 ovarian cancer



Ovacom is a national charity providing support and information to anyone affected by ovarian cancer.

We run a free telephone and email support line and work to raise awareness and give a voice to all those affected by ovarian cancer.

This booklet is part of a series giving clinical information about ovarian cancer.

It is for those who have been diagnosed with stage 1 ovarian cancer and want more information about their cancer and how it is treated.



Stage 1 ovarian cancer

The ovarian cancer stage means how far your cancer has spread at the time it is discovered.

Cancer staging

The stage of your cancer may be assessed after your diagnostic tests, but it is usually confirmed after surgery.

During your operation to remove the cancer the surgeon may take samples from the cancer and from fluid, which are then examined under a microscope. This usually shows the stage of your cancer.

The system of staging also applies to fallopian tube and peritoneal cancers.

What is stage 1 ovarian cancer?

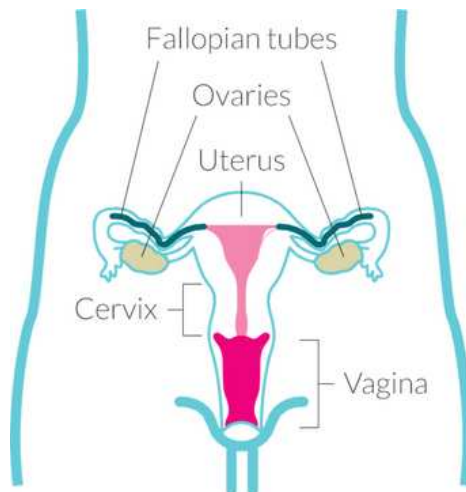
This is the earliest stage of ovarian cancer and means that your cancer is contained within the ovary or on the surface of the ovary. At this stage the cancer may cause few symptoms, and some people are not aware that anything is wrong. Others may experience abdominal swelling caused by large cysts that are found to contain ovarian cancer. Only a small number of people have their cancer found at this early stage.

Stage 1a means the cancer is contained in one ovary.

Stage 1b means it is contained inside both ovaries.

Stage 1c is when the cancer is limited to one or both ovaries or fallopian tubes, with any of the following:

- If there is surgical spill, this is stage 1c1.
- If the sac surrounding the cancer has burst before surgery or there is cancer present on the surface of the ovary or fallopian tube, this is stage 1c2.
- If cancer cells are found in fluid samples taken during surgery, this is stage 1c3.



A diagram of the female reproductive system

Grading stage 1 ovarian cancer

Ovarian cancer is graded as well as staged. This shows how active the cancer is and how quickly or slowly it may grow.

Grade 1 (sometimes called well differentiated) cancer means when it is viewed under a microscope the cells look similar to normal cells, which means they are likely to grow slowly.

Grade 2 (moderately differentiated) cells look more abnormal and are expected to grow slightly faster.

Grade 3 (poorly differentiated or undifferentiated) cells look very different from normal cells and are expected to grow more quickly.

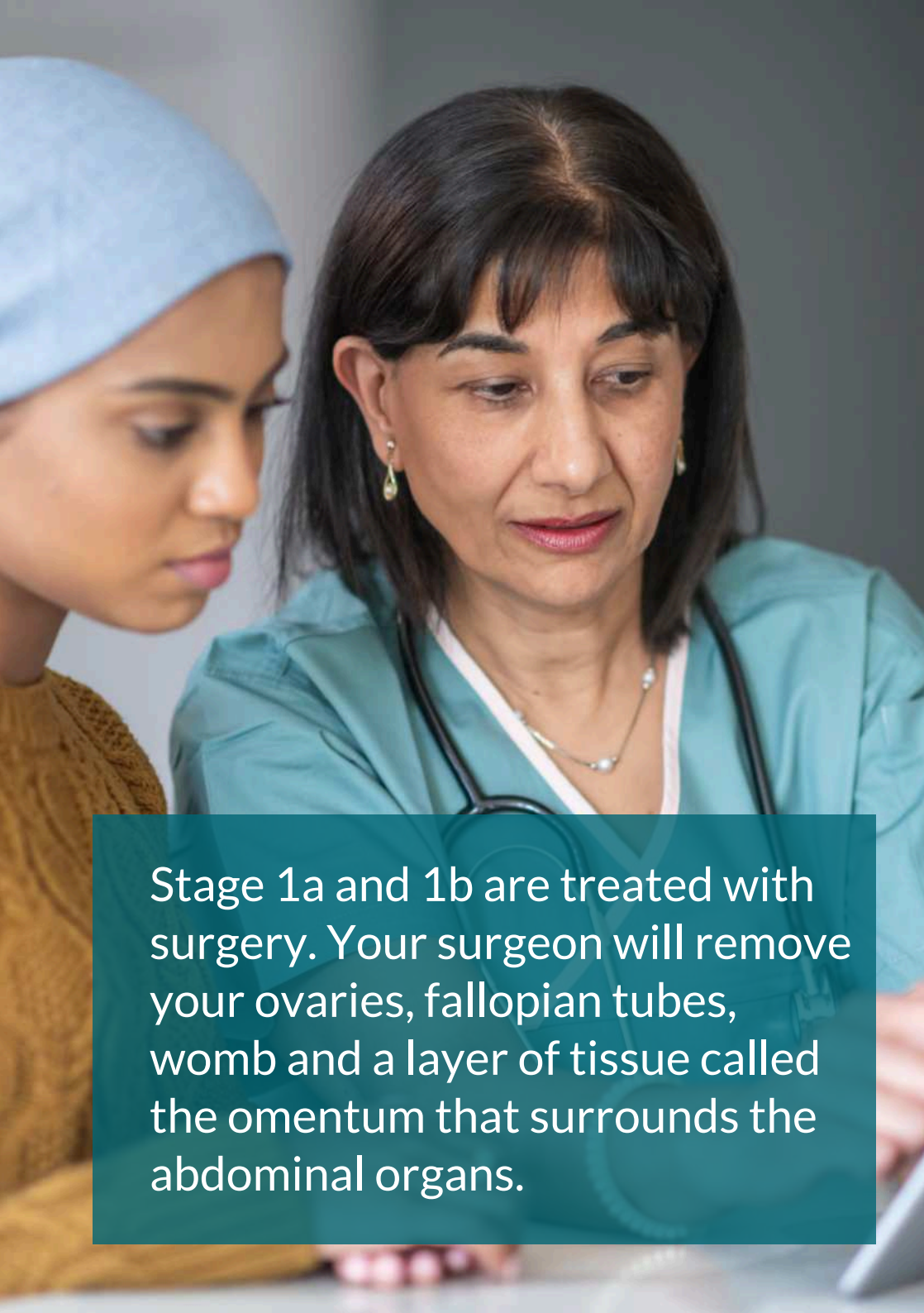
How is stage 1 ovarian cancer treated?

If the cancer is found to be at a very early stage, such as stage 1, you may have the affected ovary, and the fallopian tube that connects it to the womb, removed. This is a salpingo oophorectomy. Some other biopsies such as omental or lymph nodes may be done. This operation can also be used to preserve fertility in some circumstances. If the cancer has spread to both ovaries, they will both be removed along with both fallopian tubes. This is a bilateral salpingo oophorectomy.

It may also be necessary to remove the womb and cervix, called a total abdominal hysterectomy. After this operation you will not be able to get pregnant and you will experience menopause.

If you have early stage ovarian cancer and you would like to keep your fertility, you will need to discuss this possibility with your consultant. You can see more information here:

<https://www.ovacome.org.uk/surgery-for-ovarian-cancer-booklet>

A photograph of two female healthcare professionals. The woman on the right is wearing teal scrubs, a stethoscope, and a necklace, looking down with a focused expression. The woman on the left is wearing a light blue surgical cap and a brown sweater, also looking down. They appear to be in a clinical or hospital setting, possibly reviewing a patient's chart or a medical device.

Stage 1a and 1b are treated with surgery. Your surgeon will remove your ovaries, fallopian tubes, womb and a layer of tissue called the omentum that surrounds the abdominal organs.

Your treatment after surgery will depend on the grade of your cancer. If it is stage 1a or stage 1b with a grade of 1 or 2 it is less likely to spread, and you will be treated with surgery only. If your cancer has been graded at 3 then you will be offered chemotherapy.

Chemotherapy

Stage 1a grade 3, 1b grade 3 and all stage 1c ovarian cancer is treated with surgery, and chemotherapy after the surgery is generally considered. This is to make sure any cancer cells still in your pelvis and abdomen after the operation are eliminated.

Before you start chemotherapy, you need to recover from the surgery. Usually within six weeks of your operation you will start a course of six chemotherapy treatments, one given every three weeks. It is likely that your consultant will recommend carboplatin chemotherapy.

You can see more information here:

<https://www.ovacome.org.uk/chemotherapy-booklet>

We welcome your feedback on this booklet. Please email ovacome@ovacome.org.uk or call 0800 008 7054. If you would like to discuss anything about ovarian cancer, please phone our support line on 0800 008 7054 Monday to Friday between 10am and 5pm. You can also visit our website at www.ovacome.org.uk.

Reviewed by Professor Sean Kehoe MD DCH FRCOG. Professor of Gynaecological cancer and lead clinician, Oxford Gynaecological Centre, Churchill Hospital, Oxford; Senior Research Fellow, St Peters College, Oxford

Disclaimer

Ovacome booklets provide information and support. We make every effort to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information at the time of publication. The information we give is not a substitute for professional medical care. If you suspect you have cancer you should consult your doctor as quickly as possible.

Ovacome cannot accept any liability for any inaccuracy in linked sources.

Version 2.6 | Date last updated Jan 2025 | Date for review Jan 2028

ovacome..
ovarian cancer

Support line: 0800 008 7054
Office phone: 0207 299 6654
Website: www.ovacome.org.uk
Email: ovacome@ovacome.org.uk

Ovacome is a charity. We receive no government funding and most of our funding is provided by our community of supporters. We want to continue providing free support and information to people when they need it most. If you can, then please help us by making a donation. You can scan the QR code to the right or visit www.ovacome.org.uk/donate.



Registered with



FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR

Registered Charity Number: 1159682