



Australian Government

Cancer Australia

National Centre for

Gynaecological Cancers

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR GYNAECOLOGICAL CANCERS

What is fallopian tube cancer?

Fallopian tube cancer is a cancer that arises from one or both of the fallopian tubes.

The fallopian tubes

The fallopian tubes are the tubular structures which connect the upper, outer-most part of the uterus with the ovary, and provide a means for fertilisation of the female egg.

In women of reproductive age, an egg is released from one of the ovaries into the adjacent fallopian tube once each month during ovulation.

The tube helps to move the egg along its journey to the uterus with small hair-like projections called cilia, which line the tube's insides.

In the uterus (also called the womb), the egg is either fertilised by male sperm or discarded during menstruation.

The fallopian tubes are named after a famous Italian physician named Gabriele Fallopio (1523–1562), who first described them.

What is cancer?

Cancer is a group of many related diseases. All cancers begin in cells, the body's basic building blocks.

Normally, cells grow and multiply in an orderly way.

However, damaged genes can cause them to behave abnormally. They may grow into a lump called a tumour.

Tumours can be benign (not cancer) or malignant (cancer).

A malignant tumour is made up of cancer cells. If these cells are not treated, they may spread beyond their normal boundaries and into surrounding tissues, becoming invasive cancer. This spread of cancer is called metastasis.

When cancer spreads from its original place to another part of the body, the new tumour has the same kind of abnormal cells and the same name as the primary tumour.

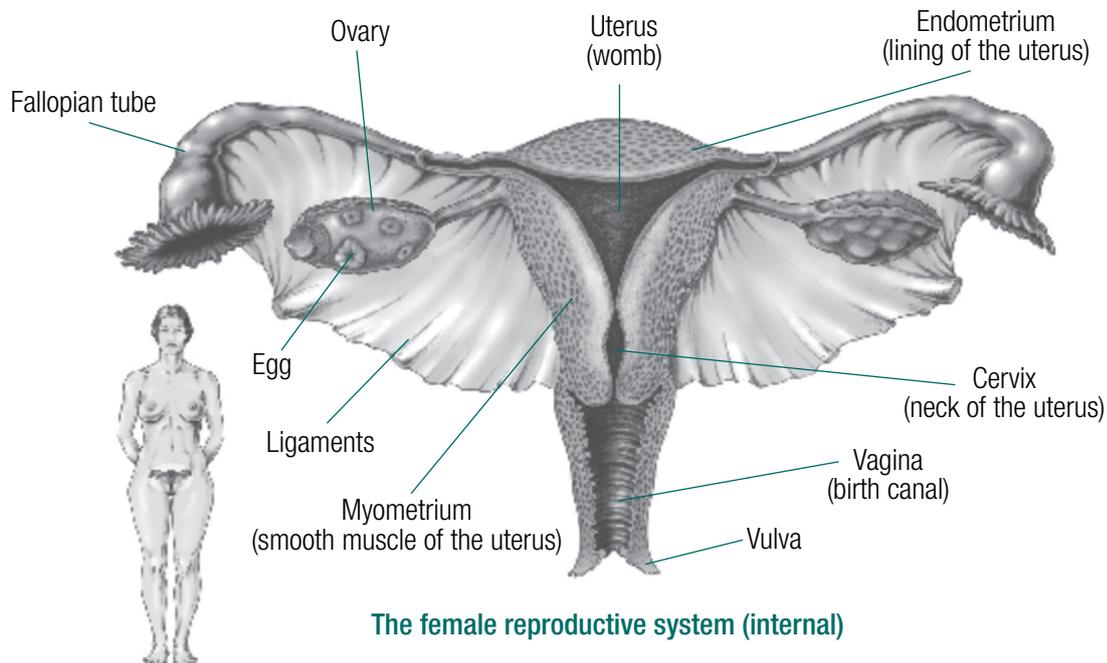
For more information about cancer and how it spreads, see our factsheet [What is cancer?](#)

Types of fallopian tube cancer

- **Papillary serous adenocarcinomas.** The vast majority (more than 95 per cent) of fallopian tube cancers are papillary serous adenocarcinomas. These cancers grow from cells that line the fallopian tubes that have become abnormal. When the cells begin to divide abnormally and gain the ability to invade other organs or spread to other parts of the body, tumours may form.

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The female reproductive system (internal)

- **Leiomyosarcomas and transitional cell carcinomas.** Very occasionally, tumours can form from smooth muscle in the fallopian tubes, in which case they are called sarcomas (leiomyosarcomas), or from other cells that line the fallopian tubes, in which case they are called transitional cell carcinomas.

Staging and grading of fallopian tube cancer

The stage of a cancer is a term used to describe its size and whether it has spread beyond its original area of the body.

The grade of a cancer describes how quickly the tumour is likely to grow.

Knowing the extent of the cancer and the grade helps the doctors to decide on the most appropriate treatment.

Staging

The following stages are used for cancer of the fallopian tube:

- **Stage 1:** Cancer is limited to one or both fallopian tubes.
- **Stage 2:** Cancer is found in one or both fallopian tubes and/or has spread to other organs in the pelvis such as the uterus, ovaries, bladder and bowel.
- **Stage 3:** Cancer is found in one or both fallopian tubes and has spread outside the pelvis to other organs in the abdomen (such as the intestines) or to lymph nodes in the abdomen.
- **Stage 4:** Cancer is found in one or both fallopian tubes and has spread outside the abdomen or has spread to inside the liver.
- **Recurrent:** If the cancer comes back after initial treatment, this is known as recurrent cancer. Fallopian tube cancer may come back in the fallopian tubes or in another part of the body.

Grading

A pathologist will use tests on your cancer biopsy to 'grade' your cancer. Grade refers to the extent of similarity of cancer cells to normal cells. Low-grade tumours tend to grow more slowly while high-grade tumours grow faster and spread more quickly.

Sources

We thank the following organisations for allowing their information to be used for this factsheet:

Gynaecological Cancer Society

www.gcsau.org

Oncolink (USA)

www.oncolink.com

Cancer Council New South Wales

www.cancercouncil.com.au

National Cancer Institute (USA)

www.cancer.gov

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR GYNAECOLOGICAL CANCERS

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The National Centre for Gynaecological Cancers is an Australian Government initiative to improve outcomes for women affected by gynaecological cancers, their families and carers, and to lessen the impact of cancer on their lives. It has been established by Cancer Australia.

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