

# HealthyLiving

CONNECTING WITH OUR PATIENTS AND OUR COMMUNITY

## From Period Pain to Persistent Warning: Recognizing the Warning Signs of Ovarian Cancer



*Stock photo posed by models.*

*Ovarian cancer is one of the most difficult gynecologic cancers to detect early, yet early detection can significantly improve outcomes. The American Cancer Society estimates about 20,000 women will receive a new diagnosis of ovarian cancer in 2025.*

*"Ovarian cancer often presents with vague symptoms that many women might dismiss or attribute to other conditions, which is why it's so important to listen to your body, act when something feels off, and advocate for yourself," says Michael Vardy, MD, FACOG, urogynecologist and chair, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Saint Peter's University Hospital.*

### Ovarian Cancer vs. Period Symptoms

One of the reasons ovarian cancer can go unnoticed is because its symptoms often overlap with those of menstrual cycles or other common conditions.

*"While period symptoms follow and resolve with the menstrual cycle, ovarian cancer symptoms tend to persist or intensify over time. This is a critical distinction that women need to understand," said Dr. Vardy.*

*Continued on page 2*

### Ovarian Cancer Symptoms

- Abdominal Pain
- Abnormal Vaginal Discharge
- Back Pain
- Bleeding After Menopause
- Decreased Appetite
- Feeling Full Earlier
- Frequent or Urgent Urination
- Indigestion or Heartburn
- Nausea or Upset Stomach
- Pain During Sex
- Pelvic Pain

### Overlap Symptoms

- Bloating
- Bowel Movement Changes and/or Gas
- Fatigue

### Period Symptoms

- Acne
- Breast Tenderness
- Cramping
- Food Cravings
- Headache
- Mood Swings
- Trouble Sleeping
- Weight Gain

## Recognizing the Warning Signs *(continued)*

### Specific Tests

Depending on the symptoms and results of a clinical evaluation, a healthcare provider may recommend certain tests:

#### Pelvic Exam

During a physical exam, the clinician may feel for abnormal masses or signs of enlargement in the ovaries or uterus.

#### Pelvic Ultrasound

An ultrasound can help identify if there are any unusual masses or changes in the ovaries or surrounding organs. This is often the first test to check for any ovarian masses, cysts, or abnormal growths.

#### Blood Tests

CA-125 is a tumor marker found in blood cells that can be elevated due to ovarian cancer, but it is not specific, as other conditions (e.g., endometriosis, fibroids, etc.) can also raise CA-125 levels.

Other tests might include a complete blood count (CBC) to check for anemia (which can be a sign of bleeding or internal issues), liver function tests, or tests for other markers that could suggest cancer or other conditions.

#### Transvaginal Ultrasound

This type of ultrasound provides a clearer image of the ovaries and is more sensitive than abdominal ultrasounds.

#### CT Scan or MRI

If a mass or abnormality is found in the pelvic ultrasound, a CT scan or MRI may be used to get a more detailed image and to check other areas for spread.

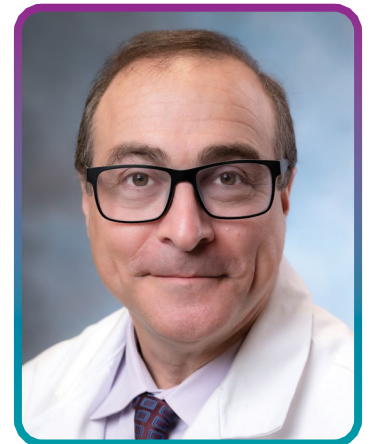
### Preventive Care

Women experiencing unusual or ongoing symptoms should track them carefully and share their concerns with a healthcare provider. Even small changes like back pain, persistent bloating or appetite loss shouldn't be ignored; these could be early warning signs of a more serious issue. Although these symptoms do not always indicate ovarian cancer, an early diagnosis can improve outcomes for any serious conditions.

In addition to staying alert to ovarian cancer symptoms, women should prioritize regular preventive care, including mammograms, Pap smears, and annual checkups.

"Being proactive about your health means taking time to listen to your body, scheduling screenings, and not hesitating to ask questions," said Dr. Vardy.

**To schedule a surgical consultation with Dr. Vardy, call 732.339.7622.**



## DID YOU KNOW

Routine gynecological care is offered by:

- Certified nurse-midwives at the Mary V. O'Shea Birth Center in New Brunswick and Saint Peter's Specialty Physicians in Lakewood
- Gynecologists with Saint Peter's Physician Associates and Saint Peter's University Hospital
- Obstetricians/gynecologists and advanced practice nurses at the Women's Health Center at Saint Peter's Family Health Center
- Obstetricians/gynecologists at Saint Peter's Gianna Center

**To find a healthcare provider near you, visit [SPPANJ.com](http://SPPANJ.com) or [saintpetershcs.com/findaphysician](http://saintpetershcs.com/findaphysician)**



## Genetic Counseling and Testing

A healthcare provider may recommend genetic counseling and testing for hereditary cancer syndromes, such as BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutations for women with a family history of ovarian, breast, or other cancers. Women with these genetic mutations have an increased risk of developing ovarian and breast cancer.

The Department of Genetics and Genomic Medicine at Saint Peter's University Hospital provides comprehensive clinical genetic services including evaluation, diagnosis, management, treatment, counseling and emotional support.

**For more information, visit [saintpetershcs.com/genetics](http://saintpetershcs.com/genetics).**

# Saint Peter's University Hospital Recognized as One of America's Best Hospitals with **FIVE 2025 Women's Choice Awards**

Saint Peter's University Hospital has been recognized as one of **America's Best Hospitals by the Women's Choice Award®**.

This award signifies that Saint Peter's University Hospital is one of the top healthcare providers in the country based on a review of almost 5,000 hospitals. Saint Peter's University Hospital was recognized in the following areas:

- **CANCER CARE**
- **COMPREHENSIVE BREAST CARE**
- **MAMMOGRAM IMAGING**
- **HEART CARE**
- **OBSTETRICS**

The Women's Choice Award is the only distinction that identifies the nation's best healthcare institutions based on robust criteria that considers patient satisfaction, clinical excellence, relevant accreditations, and women's preferences when it comes to treatment and a quality hospital experience. Additionally, each service line award has supplementary criteria that are specific to the service line. The methodology is 100 percent objective, replicable, and uniform. Only the top 13 percent of hospitals in the nation qualified for a 2025 award.

"The Women's Choice Award is a tribute to the dedicated team of professionals at Saint Peter's. Our physicians, nurses, technicians and healthcare providers deliver the highest quality medical care in combination with a compassionate bedside manner that is unmatched in the region," said Leslie D. Hirsch, FACHE, president and CEO of Saint Peter's Healthcare System. "The Women's Choice Award also provides a valuable service to patients who rely on its independent assessment of standards to evaluate healthcare providers in their geographic area."

Delia Passi, founder and CEO of the Women's Choice Award, emphasized that Saint Peter's University Hospital truly delivers on the care that matters most to women, who make over 90 percent of healthcare decisions.

"Being treated with the proper level of care impacts your health, well-being, and healing so all of our methodologies take into account the hospital's patient recommendation rating along with a strong clinical performance," said Passi. "By letting women know which hospitals in their area are among the best, we are able to reduce risk by helping them make better decisions and smarter healthcare choices."

**For more information on Saint Peter's awards, visit [saintpetershcs.com/award](https://saintpetershcs.com/award)**



Time to schedule your mammogram?  
Visit [saintpetershcs.com/mammogram](https://saintpetershcs.com/mammogram)  
to schedule an appointment at Saint Peter's  
Breast Center.



# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

For more information or to register for a program, call the contact number listed or visit [saintpetershcs.com/events](http://saintpetershcs.com/events). Most programs are FREE unless noted; please call for information.

## Cancer Support

**Cancer Care**  
800.813.HOPE (4673)  
[supportgroup@cancercare.org](mailto:supportgroup@cancercare.org)

**Cancer Hope Network**  
877.467.3638

**Crossroads4Hope**  
908.658.5400

**Sister 2 Sister**  
For Breast Cancer Survivors  
732.246.8300

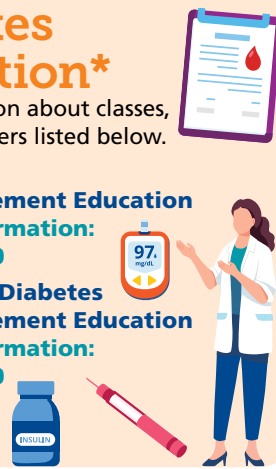


## Diabetes Education\*

For information about classes, call the numbers listed below.

**Diabetes Self-Management Education**  
Call for information:  
732.339.7630

**Gestational Diabetes Self-Management Education**  
Call for information:  
732.339.7630



## Colorectal Cancer Education and Awareness

Friday, March 28, 2025  
12 – 5 pm

Sister Marie de Pazzi  
Conference Center  
Saint Peter's University Hospital

Scan the QR code to register.



## Parent Education

Some parenting classes are being held online. Once registered for a class, access information will be provided to you.

Register at [saintpetershcs.com/ParentEducation](http://saintpetershcs.com/ParentEducation). For information about the following classes, please call Parent Education at 732.745.8579.

<b>Baby Care</b>	<b>Hypnobirthing</b>
<b>Birth Center Class</b> (for moms under midwifery care)	<b>New Daddy Class</b>
<b>Breastfeeding Class</b>	<b>Prenatal Yoga/Exercise Class</b>
<b>Grandparents Class</b>	<b>Prepared Childbirth/Lamaze Classes</b>
	<b>Sibling Class</b>

## Support Groups

**Bariatric Nutrition Support**  
2nd Thursday of each month  
Next meeting:  
March 13 • 6 – 7 pm  
Call 732.339.7450 for Zoom meeting information

**Bereavement**  
Call Pastoral Care for information:  
732.745.8565

**Craniofacial Teen Girls**  
Call for information:  
732.745.8600, x8113

**MyGoal Autism Family**  
2nd Sunday of each month  
Next meeting:  
March 9 • 3 pm  
Call 877.886.9462 or email [info@mygoalautism.org](mailto:info@mygoalautism.org) for virtual meeting information

**SHARE**  
3rd Thursday of each month  
Next meeting:  
March 20 • 7 – 9 pm  
Call 732.745.8522 or email [imariano@saintpetersuh.com](mailto:imariano@saintpetersuh.com) for Zoom link

**Spouse/Partner Caregiver Support**  
Call for information:  
732.745.8600, x8653



offers comprehensive

## Cardiac Care

specializing in both emergency and elective angioplasty procedures.

For more information, call the **Cardiac Catheterization Lab** at 732.745.8600, ext. 5458.

## Parent Support

Registration is required. Visit [saintpetershcs.com/ParentEducation](http://saintpetershcs.com/ParentEducation) or call 732.745.8579.

**Breastfeeding Support Group**  
1st Tuesday of each month  
Next meeting: March 4 • 1 pm

**New Moms Support Group "Life Will Never Be The Same"**  
1st Tuesday of each month  
Next meeting: March 4 • 12 pm

## Saint Peter's Virtual Urgent Care

Monday through Friday  
5 to 10 p.m.

Saturday & Sunday  
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.



[saintpetershcs.com/virtualurgentcare](http://saintpetershcs.com/virtualurgentcare)

Need a doctor? To find a Saint Peter's physician, visit [saintpetershcs.com/findaphysician](http://saintpetershcs.com/findaphysician).

Online scheduling is also available with select Saint Peter's Healthcare System physicians via Zocdoc at [BookMySPDoc.com](http://BookMySPDoc.com)

This calendar is for information only. Do not rely on it to make healthcare decisions on your own; instead, talk with your healthcare provider for advice and treatment. Do not ignore medical advice or delay seeking it because of something you read here. We do not suggest or endorse that you have any tests, use products, or use other information in this document without advice from your healthcare provider.



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