



MEDICAL MOMENTS

# Health disparities in gynecologic cancers

Each year, thousands of women are diagnosed with gynecologic cancers in the U.S. While cervical, ovarian and uterine cancer affects all races, Black women are often diagnosed at later stages and are more likely to die from these diseases. Dr. Kristina Butler, a Mayo Clinic gynecologic oncologist, discusses health disparities and prevention.

Gynecologic cancers target the female reproductive system. This includes cancer of the ovaries, fallopian tubes, uterus, cervix, vulva and vagina. About 100,000 women are diagnosed yearly. However, outcomes are different for minority women. “We do see, unfortunately, elevated mortality rates in Black and Hispanic women in gynecologic cancer,” says Dr. Butler.

## Know your risk

There are several socioeconomic factors that play a role in gynecologic cancer disparities. Obesity, diabetes and hypertension also contribute to cancer risks says Dr. Butler. “I think that the healthcare disparities involve comorbidities of these patients, access for these patients, transportation,” says Dr. Butler.

She says finding a healthcare professional you’re comfortable with, getting vaccinated against HPV, and undergoing regular pelvic exams and/or Pap tests are crucial. “This is tremendously important because catching and screening these abnormalities and cancers early improves long-term outcomes for women,” explains Dr. Butler.

## Gynecologic cancer symptoms:

- Vaginal bleeding.
- Abnormal discharge.
- Pelvic pain or pressure is common for ovarian and uterine cancers.
- Itching, burning, pain, or tenderness of the vulva.

Gynecologic oncologists offer an integrated approach to the diagnosis and surgical management of cancerous and noncancerous (benign) conditions of the female reproductive system. These include cervical cancer, endometriosis, fibroids, ovarian cancer, pelvic masses, uterine cancer, vaginal cancer and vulvar cancer.

## Specialist in collaborative care

When you visit Mayo Clinic in Arizona, Florida or Minnesota for help with any of these conditions, you’ll benefit from the collaborative care of an integrated team of specialists. Your gynecologic oncologist works with the Mayo Clinic Comprehensive Cancer Center to provide leading-edge care to people who have not had success with an approved treatment.

The Mayo Clinic Comprehensive Cancer Center is one of only 41 National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer centers in the United States and the only such program in Arizona. You’ll have access to the knowledge and skills of doctors and researchers in every medical specialty and, where appropriate, to clinical trials for promising treatments.

**BEAT YOUR RISK:** Getting vaccinated against HPV and see your healthcare provider regularly.

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