

# Ultrasound ovarian cancer screening improves survival

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A University of Kentucky study just published in *Obstetrics & Gynecology* shows that annual ultrasound screening of at-risk asymptomatic women increases the survival rates of women with type I and type II epithelial ovarian cancer.

The results come from the UK Markey Cancer Center's Ovarian Cancer Screening Program, a 30-year study initiated in 1987 by gynecologic oncologist Dr. John van Nagell, Jr. and the UK College of Medicine. The goal was to study whether transvaginal sonography (TVS) screening could be an effective means of [early ovarian cancer](#) detection. Women who enrolled in the study were provided a free annual transvaginal ultrasound screening.

To date, more than 46,000 women have been given free screenings. To be eligible, women had to be asymptomatic and either age 50 or older, or age 25 or older with a documented family history of ovarian [cancer](#) in a close relative.

Through the study, 71 invasive epithelial ovarian cancers and 17 epithelial ovarian tumors of low malignant potential were found. The 5-, 10-, and

20-year disease-specific survival of patients whose invasive ovarian cancers were detected by screening was more than 30 percent higher than unscreened women with clinically detected ovarian cancer from the same geographic area treated at the Markey Cancer Center.

For the past 50 years, ovarian cancer has remained the leading cause of gynecologic cancer mortality in the United States. This year, more than 14,000 deaths from ovarian cancer will be reported in the United States, making it the fifth leading cause of female cancer mortality. When it is detected early, women often can be cured with existing treatment methods. However, most [women](#) have no symptoms until the disease has progressed to an advanced stage. As the disease progresses, [survival rates](#) drop sharply.

"While regular pelvic examination is important and can detect many other abnormalities, including cervical cancer, it is not effective in detecting ovarian cancer in its earliest and most treatable stages," van Nagell said. "This study documents that TVS [screening](#) is safe and is associated with the earlier detection of [ovarian cancer](#)."

**More information:** John R. van Nagell et al. Survival of Women With Type I and II Epithelial Ovarian Cancer Detected by Ultrasound Screening, *Obstetrics & Gynecology* (2018). DOI: [10.1097/AOG.0000000000002921](https://doi.org/10.1097/AOG.0000000000002921)

Provided by University of Kentucky

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