

# CA125 blood test

**This fact sheet will give you information and answer common questions about the use of a CA125 blood test as one of the diagnostic tests for ovarian cancer.**

## What is a CA125 blood test?

CA125 is a protein that is found in blood. A small sample of blood will be taken from your arm and sent to a lab where a simple test will measure the level of CA125 in your blood sample.

A normal level of CA125 is usually less than 35 units per millilitre (u/ml). However, some people have a naturally high level of CA125 in their blood.

As well as helping diagnose ovarian cancer, CA125 blood tests are sometimes used to monitor the treatment of ovarian cancer or check for signs of recurrence (the cancer returning).

For more information about this use of a CA125 blood test, please contact Target Ovarian Cancer's support line on **020 7923 5475** or **support@targetovariancancer.org.uk**

## When should I request a CA125 blood test?

The following symptoms are sometimes caused by ovarian cancer:

- Persistent bloating (not bloating that comes and goes)
- Feeling full quickly and/or loss of appetite
- Pelvic or abdominal pain (that's from your tummy to the top of your thighs)
- Urinary symptoms (needing to wee more urgently or more often than usual)

If you have one or more of these symptoms frequently and persistently it's unlikely that you will have ovarian cancer, but your GP will want to rule out the possibility. The CA125 blood test is a useful way to gather some more information and will help your GP decide what to do next.

If you're concerned that you have these symptoms, don't be afraid to mention to your GP that you're worried about ovarian cancer and ask about having a CA125 blood test.



Knowledge is power. Every woman who has persistent bloating, loss of appetite or feeling full quickly, abdominal pain or urinary symptoms should be able to ask for and have a CA125 test to rule out the possibility of it being ovarian cancer."

**Susannah, who had a CA125 blood test**

## How should I prepare for a CA125 blood test?

Your GP may suggest that you delay the test if you're on your period as it may affect the result. If your blood is only being tested for CA125, you can eat and drink normally before the test and resume your normal activity straight afterwards.

## Does a CA125 result above 35 u/ml mean I have ovarian cancer?

No. A CA125 blood test result above 35 u/ml does not mean that you have ovarian cancer. The level of CA125 in the blood can rise for many reasons including endometriosis, menstruation, ovarian cysts, and sometimes ovarian cancer. This is one reason why it can't be used as the only test to diagnose ovarian cancer.

If the level of CA125 in your blood is 35 u/ml or higher, your GP should arrange for you to have an ultrasound scan of your abdomen and pelvis (from your tummy and to the top of your thighs). The ultrasound scan will create pictures of your ovaries so that they can be checked for anything unusual and will help your GP gather more information. In some areas of the UK, a CA125 blood test and ultrasound scan will be ordered at the same time.

## Does a CA125 result below 35 u/ml mean that I don't have ovarian cancer?

If your result is below 35 u/ml it's unlikely you have ovarian cancer. However, it is possible to have ovarian cancer and a CA125 test result below 35 u/ml. If your symptoms continue or get worse you must contact your GP again to let them know and make an appointment for a check-up within one month.

## Next steps

### How do I get my test result?

Your GP will let you know how long your test result should take to come back from the lab, and they will also tell you how to find out the result of your test. At many GP surgeries you can register for online access to your record and to see your results so ask your surgery for further information if this is how you would like to access them.

If you don't hear anything within two weeks, give your GP a call. If you have received your test results and you aren't sure what they mean contact your GP and ask them to explain.

If your test result is above 35 u/ml your GP will arrange further tests or a follow-up appointment or refer you to specialists in hospital.

### What if my symptoms persist?

If your CA125 level is below 35 u/ml, but your symptoms continue or worsen then you must tell your GP within a month. Why not keep a symptoms diary? Make a quick note every day of each symptom and how bad it is. This might help your GP to identify the cause of your symptoms. You can download or order a Symptoms diary from Target Ovarian Cancer's website [targetovariancancer.org.uk/guides](https://targetovariancancer.org.uk/guides) or by getting in touch with us.

You can learn more about ovarian cancer by reading our Symptoms leaflet and our 10 top tips for speaking to your GP. We also have a fact sheet available about what to expect from an ultrasound scan. Again, you can download or order these from our website or by getting in touch with us.

## Find out more

If you need more information on something specific, or just want to chat, our specialist nurses are here. Our support line is open 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. Call us on **020 7923 5470**.

 Support line: 020 7923 5470

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