

## Considerations for Removing or Keeping Your Ovaries

### Your options

- Have your uterus **and** your ovaries removed (hysterectomy with oophorectomy).
- Have your uterus removed, but keep your ovaries (hysterectomy only).

### Key points to remember

- The main reason doctors recommend removing the ovaries during hysterectomy is to lower the risk of [ovarian cancer](#). Studies show that if you are at high risk, surgery greatly lowers your risk.
- If you aren't at high risk for cancer, having your ovaries removed isn't recommended.
- It's important to know your risk for cancer when deciding whether to have your ovaries removed during your hysterectomy. Your doctor will help you find out your risk by talking to you about your medical history and your family history. [Removing the ovaries if you're at risk](#) is a different decision than if you're not at risk.
- Removing the ovaries may increase your risk of [heart disease](#) and [osteoporosis](#).
- If you have your ovaries removed before menopause, you will go into early menopause. You may get [hot flashes](#) and other symptoms.

### FAQs

#### [What is oophorectomy?](#)

Surgery to remove the ovaries is called oophorectomy (say "oh-uh-fuh-REK-tuh-mee"). The ovaries are an important part of the [female reproductive system](#). They store eggs and produce sex hormones, including [estrogen](#).

Of women who have a hysterectomy, about half of them have their ovaries removed at the same time.<sup>[1](#)</sup> The main reason doctors recommend removing the ovaries along with the uterus is to reduce the risk of [ovarian cancer](#). Studies show that if you are at high risk, surgery greatly lowers your risk.

#### [What are the benefits of oophorectomy?](#)

For women at average risk—this means no personal or family history of ovarian or breast cancer—there is no clear benefit to removing the ovaries at any age. Hysterectomy itself can reduce your risk of ovarian cancer.<sup>[1](#)</sup>

If you have severe premenstrual syndrome (PMS), removing the ovaries can stop hormone changes. This may help you feel better.

If you are at **high risk** for breast or ovarian cancer, having your ovaries removed can greatly lower your risk. Women at high risk for these cancers include those who:

- Have a BRCA gene change (BRCA stands for BReast CAncer).

- Have a family history of ovarian cancer before age 50.

If you don't know if you are at high risk for breast or ovarian cancer, talk to your doctor. If your doctor thinks you could be at risk, you may want to think about gene testing.

When your ovaries are removed, you lose the estrogen that they produce. Without estrogen, you will go into early menopause. This can cause hot flashes and other symptoms.

Having your ovaries removed before age 65 may increase your chance of getting:

- [Osteoporosis](#), which can lead to broken bones and hip fractures.
- [Heart disease](#), which is the number one cause of death in women in the United States.

Women who choose to have their ovaries removed can take [estrogen replacement therapy](#). This treatment doesn't prevent heart disease, but it helps to lower your risk of osteoporosis. If you already have bone loss, other medicines can help protect your bones.

#### [Why might your doctor recommend having your ovaries removed?](#)

Your doctor may recommend having your ovaries removed when you have a hysterectomy if:

- You have a BRCA gene change.
- You have a strong family history of early ovarian cancer. You have a higher risk of ovarian cancer if a close family member, especially your mother or sister, has had breast cancer.
- You have a type of breast cancer that estrogen causes to grow.
- You have severe premenstrual syndrome that could be helped by having your ovaries removed.
- You have had pelvic pain that involved your ovaries.