

Information about **CA125** and **Ovarian cancer**

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**NATIONAL BREAST
CANCER CENTRE**
Incorporating the
Ovarian Cancer Program

As part of the diagnostic process to check for ovarian cancer, a CA125 test may have been suggested by your doctor. In this case, the following information is provided to help you to understand more about the CA125 test. If you have any other questions you should speak to your doctor.

What is CA125?

CA125 is a protein found in the blood. It is known as a tumour or cancer marker as increased levels may indicate that ovarian cancer is present.

Why do I need to have the test?

CA125 can be produced by ovarian cancer cells. If a transvaginal ultrasound shows a cyst or tumour on your ovary, a CA125 may be helpful in finding out if these changes are benign or malignant.

What is involved with the test?

A sample of blood will be taken from your arm and sent to a pathologist for analysis. You do not have to fast before the test.

I've heard that a CA125 test is all I need to tell me if I have ovarian cancer. Is that correct?

No. There are many other causes for raised CA125 levels such as ovulation, menstruation, endometriosis, fibroids or benign ovarian cysts. Illnesses such as liver or kidney disease can also cause a raised CA125.

For these reasons, a CA125 test alone can not be used to diagnose ovarian cancer.

A CA125 test is more helpful in diagnosing ovarian cancer in post-menopausal women than in pre-menopausal women.

What happens if my blood test for CA125 is normal?

About 50% of women with early-stage ovarian cancer have normal CA125 levels. If your CA125 levels are normal and symptoms persist or get worse, you should go back to your doctor. Transvaginal ultrasound is also used in the investigation of symptoms that may be ovarian cancer. If you have not had a transvaginal ultrasound you should request one.