

A call to increase awareness of the subtle signs of ovarian cancer

2021 Annual Meeting Resolution

“Every two hours in the UK someone dies of ovarian cancer. Making sure GPs and the public know what to look for will not only ensure the early detection and treatment of this disease but transform lives today and for generations to come. NFWI calls on WI members everywhere to help increase awareness of the subtle signs of ovarian cancer”

Proposed by Kitchen Dancers WI, Hampshire Federation
Passed by **99.48%** majority

What is the issue?

This campaign seeks to raise awareness of the symptoms of ovarian cancer among women and healthcare professionals, to help ensure that women receive early treatment where necessary.

Why does this matter?

Ovarian cancer is one of the most common types of cancer in women, mainly affecting those who have been through the menopause. According to Cancer Research UK, there are around 7,400 new ovarian cancer cases in the UK each year, and 4,200 deaths.

The earlier ovarian cancer is diagnosed the easier it is to treat and so public awareness and understanding of the symptoms is really important. Cancer Research UK states that when ovarian cancer is diagnosed early, nine out of ten women will survive for five years or more. This compares to less than three in 20 women when diagnosed at the latest stage.

However, because the early signs of ovarian cancer are similar to conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), and pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS), it is often not diagnosed until it has spread and a cure is not possible.

What would we like to achieve?

Full details about the campaign and actions for members to take will be set out in a new action pack which will be available to download on the WI website and My WI¹ shortly. Here we provide a brief outline of our early plans and objectives.

- To increase understanding of the signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer among WI members and their communities.
- To empower and support WI members to have conversations with friends and family about their own and their loved ones health, focussing on possible signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer.

¹ It's easy to get set up. Simply visit <https://mywi.thewi.org.uk/welcome-to-my-wi> then follow the on screen options.

- To provide WI members with opportunities to share their personal experiences of ovarian cancer diagnosis and treatment with the aim of raising awareness of the subtle signs of the disease and the need for early diagnosis.
- To empower federations and WIs to mobilise their communities and support the efforts of local specialist groups in sharing information about the signs of ovarian cancer.
- To amplify the key messages of existing national campaigns that aim to increase awareness of the signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer.
- To encourage healthcare professionals to consider ovarian cancer when patients present with possible symptoms and make a referral where necessary.

Get involved - some ideas for initial campaign actions

- **Help raise awareness.** The Public Affairs Department will be producing WI resources for members to use to spread awareness of the signs of ovarian cancer in their communities. These will be available shortly; however, in the meantime you can help increase understanding of the issue by finding out about the signs and starting to think about what you could do in your WI to reach more women with this information.

Visit the [NHS website](#) for a list of the symptoms, and information about diagnosis and treatment.

If you are holding an awareness event or meeting in your WI or federation, use our evaluation form to track your impact on a local level. Download the form [here](#). Sharing this feedback with the NFWI Public Affairs Department will help us track the progress of the campaign and the difference the WI is making.

- **Keep in mind existing resources that are available to support people with possible symptoms of ovarian cancer.** The charities Ovarian Cancer Action and Ovacome have symptom diaries that you can use to keep a record of your symptoms. It's important to see your GP if you are experiencing any of the symptoms of ovarian cancer, and using a diary can help your GP understand how persistent and severe they are. These resources may be useful for you, a loved one or a fellow WI member.

Click [here](#) to download Ovarian Cancer Action's symptom diary

Click [here](#) to download Ovacome's symptom diary

If you are interested in understanding the factors that may increase your risk of getting ovarian cancer, such as age and family history, you can find this information on the [NHS website](#). Ovarian Cancer Action also has a tool to help you check whether your family history puts you at risk of ovarian cancer. You can access this [here](#).

- **Share your experiences with us.** To raise awareness of the importance of being able to identify a possible sign of ovarian cancer, we would love to hear why this issue is important to you and about any experience you may have had linked to the resolution. In support of the mandate, stories that are shared with us may be used to promote the WI's campaign in NFWI Public Affairs resources, *WI Life*, and on our

social media channels. You can of course remain anonymous if you wish to. Use the contact details at the end of this briefing to get in touch.

Sources of support

Ovacome Support Service

Ovacome is the UK's ovarian cancer charity providing expert support and information. They support anyone affected by ovarian cancer; this often includes family members, partners, friends and cancer care professionals. Their support service is available Monday-Friday 10am to 5pm.

For information and emotional support, contact their support line on 07503 682 311 or Freephone 0800 008 7054. You can also email support@ovacome.org.uk or text and WhatsApp them on 07503 682 311

Target Ovarian Cancer Support Line

Target Ovarian Cancer's Support Line is for anyone affected by ovarian cancer – if you're worried about symptoms, if you have a diagnosis, or if you're a family member or a friend supporting someone living with ovarian cancer.

Their support line is open from 9am until 5.30pm, Monday to Friday.

Call 020 7923 5475 or fill in a [contact form](#) on their website.

Macmillan Cancer Support Helpline

You can call 0808 808 00 00, seven days a week, 8am-8pm

Alternatively, the Macmillan Chat Service offers confidential support to people living with cancer and their loved ones. Click [here](#) to find out more.

You can also contact the Macmillan Support Line using this [online form](#).

Further information

If you would like to know more about ovarian cancer, Ovarian Cancer Action has compiled a list of frequently asked questions on their [website](#).

You can also find out more by visiting the websites of other specialist charities including Target Ovarian Cancer, Ovacome, GRACE and The Eve Appeal.

Get in touch with the Public Affairs Department

If you would like to receive monthly e-updates about NFWI campaigns, including our new campaign on ovarian cancer, please sign up to the Public Affairs Digest through the campaigns home page: thewi.org.uk/campaigns

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