



TRANSCRIPT

Understanding womb cancer

This video has been made to help you understand more about womb cancer. As mentioned in the video titled, "*What is cancer?*", cancer can arise from almost any cell in the body.

Most womb cancers arise from the lining of the womb, which is also known as the **endometrium**. This is the layer that is shed during the menstrual period. These womb cancers are known as endometrial cancers [carcinomas]. A few cancers can arise from the muscle of the womb. These are known as sarcomas.

Before we go further, let us look at the parts of the womb and the structures that are related to it. The main part of the womb is known as the body, which is made up of the lining or **endometrium** and the muscle or **myometrium**. Then we come to the lowermost part of the womb, which is known as the **cervix** or neck of the womb. The cervix opens into the **vagina**. The **ovaries** are where eggs are produced, which travel through the **tubes** to reach the womb.

This video will focus on cancers of the endometrium.

Womb cancer is becoming more common worldwide. In the United Kingdom, there are almost 10,000 cases diagnosed each year. Most cases of womb cancer, but not all, are seen in people after menopause, which is the time at which natural periods stop occurring. The most common symptom of womb cancer is vaginal bleeding after menopause, also known as post-menopausal bleeding, which should be reported to your doctor.

Although most instances of post-menopausal bleeding are not because of womb cancer, in order to rule out this possibility, this should always be investigated. You can find out more about the investigations that are done, such as scans and biopsies, in the series of videos titled, "*Understanding my tests*".

When someone has been found to have womb cancer, we need to find out a bit more about the specific kind of cancer that person has, such as the **type**, **grade** and **stage**, as well as **LVSI** and the **molecular classification** of the cancer, in order to plan the best possible treatment for them.

Let us look at the different things we need to find out.

Cancer type:

There are different types of womb cancer. These look different to pathologists down the microscope. Knowing the type of cancer can affect what treatment is given. The most common type is endometrioid carcinoma, which accounts for almost three quarters of all cases. The next most common type is serous carcinoma.

Cancer grade:

Some cancers are also given a grade. Grade is an estimate of how quickly a cancer is growing and therefore the way it is likely to behave. Out of the different types of womb cancer, only endometrioid carcinomas are given a grade. Endometrioid carcinomas are graded from grade 1 to grade 3, with grade 1 being the most slowly growing. The grade of cancer affects the treatment that is given.

Cancer stage:

Stage is a measure of how far the cancer has spread and ranges from stage I to stage IV. Each of these stages also has sub-stages, for example, your doctor may call your cancer stage Ib. The stage and sub-stage of a cancer affects the treatment that is given. A cancer is given a stage by a combination of what pathologists see down the microscope, what is seen during surgery, and what can be seen on any scans that you have. Stage I womb cancers are those that are just within the body of the womb. Stage II cancers involve the cervix as well as the body of the womb. In stage III, the cancer is seen on the outside of the womb or involves the tubes, the ovaries, or the lymph nodes around the womb. Stage IV cancers are those that have spread to other, more distant sites.

LVSI:

One of the ways in which cancer cells spread from one place to another is by entering blood vessels or lymph vessels. This is known as **lymphovascular space involvement (LVSI)**. Pathologists look for LVSI down the microscope. When there is a lot of LVSI found, this can affect the treatment that is given.

Molecular classification:

In addition to the appearance of the cancer cells and the extent of the cancer, or how far it's travelled, it is also important to look within the cancer cells themselves. Cancer cells from the biopsy or hysterectomy samples are tested for changes in their genes in order to place the cancer into a molecular group. This is covered in the video titled, *"Understanding my tests – molecular classification of womb cancer"*, which you can find within the series of videos titled, *"Understanding my tests"*.

Every person and every cancer is unique. Knowing all of these results helps the multidisciplinary team, the patient, and their family to make decisions on the best treatment options for their particular cancer.

Thank you for viewing this video. We hope that it has helped inform you more about womb cancer.