Referral to the genetics clinic to discuss hereditary ovarian cancer

This leaflet offers information about being referred to the genetics clinic to discuss the possibility of you having hereditary ovarian cancer. If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us using the number given at the end of this information sheet.

What is inherited ovarian cancer?
One in 50 women in the general population will develop ovarian cancer. Of these women, a small proportion (approximately one in seven) may have inherited a genetic fault which has made them more likely than average to develop ovarian cancer.

Some of these women may have family members who have been diagnosed with breast or ovarian cancer, whilst others may have no family history of cancer.

What are genes?
Genes are coded messages that give instructions for how cells in the body grow and function. Genes come in pairs; we inherit one copy from each parent.

A gene fault is a change in the coded message, which alters the instructions for the cells.

How are genes involved in inherited ovarian cancer?
We know of two genes, called BRCA1 and BRCA2, which have a role in the development of breast and ovarian cancer.

If a woman has a fault in one copy of the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene, her risk of developing breast or ovarian cancer is higher. Women with a fault in these genes are more likely to develop cancer of the breast and/or ovary at a younger age and may get cancer more than once.

Who can have genetic testing for inherited ovarian cancer?
We would like to offer you an appointment in the genetics clinic to talk about the possibility that you might have a BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene fault. We will discuss testing for the gene fault, and what this might mean for you and your family. In some families, based on the outcome of the BRCA1 and BRCA2 testing, further investigations may also be suggested. Your cancer genetics clinician will discuss this with you if appropriate.
What happens next?
If you would like a genetics appointment, please speak to your gynaecologist or oncologist and they will refer you to our service. We will then arrange an appointment to see you in the genetics clinic. If you choose to attend the appointment there is no obligation to take the test. We offer this test because there are new cancer treatments that specifically target BRCA gene faults. The results of the test could also have implications for other members of your family.

Contact us
If you have any questions or concerns about anything in this leaflet, please contact t: 020 7188 1364 and ask to speak to the duty genetic counsellor or cancer genetics consultant.

Guy’s and St Thomas’ hospitals offer a range of cancer-related information leaflets for patients and carers, available at www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/cancer-leaflets. For information leaflets on other conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

**Dimbleby Cancer Care** provides cancer support services for Guy’s and St Thomas’. We have a drop-in information area staffed by specialist nurses and offer complementary therapies, psychological support and benefits advice for patients and carers.

Dimbleby Cancer Care is located in the Welcome Village of the Cancer Centre at Guy’s, t: 020 7188 5918 e: DimblebyCancerCare@gstt.nhs.uk

Your comments and concerns
For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.
t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk
t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services
If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.
t: 020 7188 8815 e: languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111
Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.
t: 111 w: 111.nhs.uk

NHS website
Online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing.
w: www.nhs.uk