

Press Release

Less Than One in Three Women Feel Confident Recognising Ovarian Cancer Symptoms

- New research highlights significant gaps in symptom awareness ahead of World Ovarian Cancer Day
- Nationwide campaign calls for greater awareness of “BEAT” symptoms of ovarian cancer
- Almost one in five women (19%) incorrectly believe CervicalCheck screens for all gynaecological cancers.

Wednesday, 6th May 2026: World Ovarian Cancer Day takes place on Friday, 8th May 2026. On this day, patient organisations, healthcare professionals, and advocates around the world unite to raise awareness of ovarian cancer, improve understanding of symptoms, support women affected by the disease, and highlight the urgent need for earlier diagnosis, as ovarian cancer continues to be one of the most challenging cancers to detect early.

The Irish Network for Gynaecological Oncology (INGO) is a voluntary coordination body of over 30 of Ireland’s leading gynaecological cancer campaigners, researchers, and patient advocates. Committed to educating the public on prevention, symptoms, early diagnosis, and treatment, INGO launches an annual campaign each year to coincide with World Ovarian Cancer Day.

INGO has released new research which reveals significant gaps in awareness and understanding of ovarian cancer symptoms among women in Ireland. Less than one in three women (29%) feel confident they would recognise the symptoms of ovarian cancer, and only 2% of women are aware of the B.E.A.T acronym, which represents the key symptoms of ovarian cancer:

- **B**loating that is persistent and doesn’t come and go
- **E**ating less and feeling full more quickly
- **A**bdominal and pelvic pain you feel most days
- **T**oilet changes in urination or bowel habits

If these symptoms occur frequently, are persistent, and represent a change from what is normal for someone, medical advice should be sought. Early detection significantly improves outcomes, making awareness and timely action critical. The clear message is that if a woman experiences any of these symptoms for three weeks or more, she should contact her GP.

The research also underlines disparities in recognition of individual symptoms. The majority of women recognise abdominal or pelvic pain (86%) as a symptom of ovarian cancer, followed by persistent bloating (67%), and changes in toilet habits (64%). The least recognised BEAT

symptom is eating less and feeling full more quickly (32%), which highlights a critical knowledge gap in symptom recognition overall.

Confusion around the national cervical screening programme, CervicalCheck remains a concern. While 74% of women correctly identify CervicalCheck as screening for risk of cervical cancer, 19% believe it covers all gynaecological cancers. This ongoing misunderstanding is significant, as there is no screening programme for ovarian cancer, highlighting the importance of symptom awareness and prompt action.

Annually, approximately 400ⁱ women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer, and almost 300ⁱⁱ women die from this disease in the Republic of Ireland. In Northern Ireland, almost 204ⁱⁱⁱ are diagnosed and 120ⁱⁱⁱ women die. Ovarian cancer is the fourth leading cause of cancer death in women in Ireland, after lung, breast, and colorectal cancer.

This year's theme for World Ovarian Cancer Day is #NoWomanLeftBehind which promotes the urgent need to ensure that all women, regardless of geography, socio-economic background, or access to healthcare, have the knowledge, support, and resources to recognise ovarian cancer symptoms and seek timely care.

Minister Mary Butler, Government Chief Whip & Minister for Mental Health supports this year's World Ovarian Cancer Day campaign with INGO and says:

"World Ovarian Cancer Day is an important opportunity to remind women that knowing the symptoms of ovarian cancer can save lives. The recognition of persistent changes in your body and acting on them early is essential. It is vital to reinforce this key message: know the signs, stay alert to certain physical changes, and seek early medical advice if have any concerns."

Claire Thompson, Consultant Gynaecological Oncologist in the Mater

Misericordiae University Hospital and Rotunda Hospital says: *"Although treatments for ovarian cancer are constantly improving, the challenge remains that 3 out of 4 women are diagnosed when the cancer has already started to spread. There is currently no screening test so if you experience symptoms, please attend your GP or health care provider as soon as possible."*

Rachel McKeon, Chairperson and Co-Founder of OvaCare says *"I see every day how vital early awareness is for women and their families. World Ovarian Cancer Day reminds us that knowing the symptoms and accessing timely, equitable care can change outcomes. Our mission is clear: no woman should face ovarian cancer alone, and no woman should ever be left behind."*

Bridget Carr, Patient Advocate says *"Every woman in Ireland deserves to know the signs of ovarian cancer, yet too often, they are overlooked. Listen to your body, notice persistent changes, and seek medical advice if you experience the B.E.A.T. symptoms. If you feel unheard, advocate for yourself and ask, 'Could this be ovarian cancer?' Speaking up could be the moment that saves your life."*

The BEAT Bench: Art Meets Awareness

To mark World Ovarian Cancer Day 2026, the INGO, coordinated by Dr. Sharon O'Toole Trinity St James's Cancer Institute, has commissioned a striking new art installation by Chloe Mowlds of the Minaw Collective. The BEAT Bench is a vibrant, functional piece of public art designed to spark conversation and raise awareness of ovarian cancer symptoms. The installation was officially unveiled yesterday, 5th May, at Dundrum Town by special guest Miriam O'Callaghan.

Set to run from Tuesday 5th to Friday 8th May, the BEAT Bench will be positioned in a high-footfall area in Dundrum Town, encouraging shoppers to take a seat, reflect, and engage with lifesaving information about ovarian cancer symptoms. The activation will be supported by on-site volunteers and QR-coded materials linking to key awareness resources.

At the installation unveiling, **Amy Nolan, Director of Clinical Affairs, Irish Cancer Society** said *"Ireland has one of Europe's highest ovarian cancer mortality rates. Approximately 400 women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer annually, with most cases in women over 50 years of age. The INGO's latest research highlights that only 29% of women in Ireland are confident they would recognise the symptoms of ovarian cancer - resulting in their delay to seek care. 75% of patients present with late-stage disease, often because symptoms are vague or are similar to conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome. This World Ovarian Cancer Day we commit to driving ongoing awareness of ovarian cancer symptoms."*

This World Ovarian Cancer Day, individuals are encouraged to learn the symptoms, share the BEAT message, and support efforts to improve awareness and education around ovarian cancer worldwide.

For more information, please visit www.thisisGO.ie

#NoWomanLeftBehind #WorldOvarianCancerDay #BEAT #WOCD26

– ENDS –

Notes to Editor:

About the data: Research carried out by iReach and commissioned by INGO in April 2026 amongst 1,000 respondents across Ireland.

Further key report findings:

- Only 29% of women are confident they would recognise the symptoms with 3% of these feeling very confident.
- Only 2% of women are aware of the BEAT acronym.
- 86% of women think abdominal or pelvic pain felt most days can be associated with ovarian cancer, 64% of women think toilet changes can be associated with ovarian cancer, 67% of

women think that persistent bloating can be associated with it and 32% recognise eating difficulties.

- 89% of women would consider or recommend someone who experienced symptoms of ovarian cancer to make an appointment with a GP.
- 23% of women would consider or recommend researching symptoms online and 13% of females would advise someone to speak to their family and friends.
- 3 in 4 women (74%) think CervicalCheck is screening for cervical cancer, 19% of women think it's for all Gynaecological cancers, and 17% of women think it's for cancer of the vagina and womb cancer.

World Ovarian Cancer Day Activities

- The commissioned BEAT Bench will be positioned in a high-footfall area in Dundrum Town from 5th – 8th May, encouraging shoppers to take a seat, reflect, and engage with lifesaving information about ovarian cancer symptoms. The activation will be supported by on-site volunteers and QR-coded materials linking to key awareness resources.
- As part of World Ovarian Cancer Day activities OvaCare, an ovarian cancer support charity will be hosting an online coffee and chat event from 11am to 1pm on Sat 9th May 2026. Please visit <https://ovacare.ie/events/event-registration/> to register.
- Buildings will also light up teal on May 8th, including: Aras Mac Dhiarmada, Casino Marino, Collins Barracks, Convention Centre, Cork City Hall, Cork County Council, Department of Education, Marlborough St., Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Kildare St.), Donegal County Council, Farmleigh (Water Tower), Four Courts, Galway City Hall, Galway County Council, Kilkenny Castle, Laois County Hall, Liberty Hall Dublin, Mansion House Dublin, National Concert Hall, National Museum, National Library, Phoenix Park Roundabout, Rock of Cashel, Sligo City Hall, St James's Hospital Dublin, St Stephen Green- Wolfe Tone Monument, Titanic Belfast, Wexford County Hall.

Support

The INGO acknowledge the support of the National Cancer Control Programme. OvaCare and East Galway and Midlands Cancer Support Centre are grateful for the support received from AstraZeneca, AbbVie and GlaxoSmithKline towards the World Ovarian Cancer Day campaign. The INGO are grateful to Allegro's contribution to the campaign.

About INGO

The Irish Network for Gynaecological Oncology is a voluntary coordination body and consists of thirty of Ireland's foremost gynaecological cancer campaigners, researchers, and patient advocates, listed below. The aim of the group is to raise awareness of gynaecological cancers across the island of Ireland. The group participates in three major international events annually: World Ovarian Cancer Day on May 8th, Uterine Cancer Awareness Month in June and World Gynaecological Cancer Day on September 20th.

ARC Cancer Support Centres, Dublin; Answers for Cancer Podcast team; BRCA Ireland; Breakthrough Cancer Research; Cancer Care West; Cancer Trials Ireland; CervicalCheck; CERVIVA; Circle of Friends Cancer Support Centre; Coombe Women & Infants University Hospital, Dublin; Cork ARC Cancer Support; Cork Cancer Care Centre; East Galway and Midlands Cancer Support Centre; Emer Casey Foundation; Hive Cancer Support, Derry; Irish Cancer Society; Irish Society of Gynaecological Oncology; Karen Fenton Ovarian Cancer Fund; Lynch Syndrome Ireland; Marie Keating Foundation; Mater Hospital Dublin; National Cancer Control Programme; National Immunisation Office; National Women's Council of Ireland; OvaCare; Purple House Cancer Support; Queens, Belfast; Sláinte an Chláir; Sligo



Irish Network for
Gynaecological Oncology



Cancer Support; SOCK; Swell Fermanagh Cancer Survivorship Group; St. James's Hospital Foundation (GynaeCancerCare); Trinity College Dublin; Trinity St. James's Cancer Institute; University College Cork; University College Dublin School of Medicine; University College Dublin Gynaecological Oncology Group and 221+ CervicalCheck Patient Support Group.

[Click here](#) for more information on INGO.

World Ovarian Cancer Day

World Ovarian Cancer Day was established in 2013 and is the flagship awareness day of the World Ovarian Cancer Coalition. It is a global movement bringing women living with ovarian cancer, their families and supporters, patient advocacy organisations, medical practitioners and researchers together each year on the 8th May to raise awareness of ovarian cancer.

ⁱ <https://www.ncri.ie/en/statistics/incidence-statistics>

ⁱⁱ [NCRI AnnualStatisticalReport_2023%20\(27\).pdf](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/nicr/cancer-information/cancer-data-by-tumour-type/ovarian-cancer/>

