

PRESS RELEASE

Know the Five: New research highlights the importance of gynaecological cancer awareness

- **Minister for Health Dr Jennifer Carroll MacNeill joins INGO in urging women across Ireland to know the five main gynaecological cancers**
- **New research reveals significant gaps in awareness, with knowledge particularly low for uterine, vaginal and vulva cancers**



Pictured (L-R): Mairead McMahon, Marie Hannon, Anne Nally, Bridget Carr and Catriona Doyle.

Thursday, 10th September 2026: New research commissioned by the Irish Network for Gynaecological Oncology (INGO) has revealed significant gaps in awareness of the five main gynaecological cancers among women in Ireland.

The findings are being released to mark **World Gynaecological Oncology Day (World GO Day)** on 20th September, an international awareness day that brings together patients, advocates, healthcare professionals and organisations to raise awareness of gynaecological cancers.

Across the island of Ireland, approximately **2,000 gynaecological cancers are diagnosed each year**. Yet awareness varies considerably across the five main cancers: vulva vaginal, cervical, uterine and ovarian.

While cervical and ovarian cancers are widely recognised, awareness is significantly lower for uterine, vaginal and vulva cancers. Just 37% of women surveyed had heard of vulva cancer, meaning around six in 10 women had not heard of the disease.

The research also highlights lower awareness among younger women. Among women aged 25–34, just 29% had heard of vulva cancer, while awareness of uterine cancer (endometrial/womb) was also lower among women under 45 compared with older women.

The findings highlight why awareness of gynaecological cancers matters at every age. While some gynaecological cancers are more common later in life, knowing the signs and symptoms can help women understand changes in their own health and support those around them. For younger women, this may also mean recognising symptoms in a mother, older relative or friend and encouraging them to seek medical advice.

INGO is encouraging women across Ireland to become familiar with all five gynaecological cancers and to understand that each can have different symptoms, risk factors and approaches to prevention and early detection.

Know the signs

Different gynaecological cancers can cause different symptoms. Women are encouraged to speak to their GP or healthcare professional about persistent or unusual changes, including:

- Abnormal vaginal bleeding, including bleeding after the menopause
- Bleeding between periods or during or after sex
- Persistent or unusual vaginal discharge
- Persistent itching or changes to the vulva skin
- Pelvic or abdominal pain
- Persistent bloating or abdominal swelling
- Unexplained weight loss or gain
- Changes in bowel or bladder habits

Women should seek medical advice if they experience persistent or unusual symptoms.

Mairead McMahon, a vulva cancer patient, said:

“As a vulva cancer survivor, I would like to urge all women, no matter what age or stage of life, to find out what the symptoms are. Don’t ignore any changes to the vulva. Please see your GP as soon as possible – you will never regret it. The care I received enabled me to not only survive, but thrive. I resumed my career and went on to hold my little granddaughter in my arms.”

Healthcare professionals remain a trusted source of information

The research also shows that women are looking in a range of places for information about gynaecological health and cancer, including online search engines and, increasingly, AI tools.

However, healthcare professionals remain an important and trusted source of information.

Three in four women said they would turn to a GP or healthcare professional for advice, while hospitals and specialist healthcare providers were ranked among the most trusted sources of health information.

Digital sources are particularly relevant for younger women, with some saying they would use AI tools such as ChatGPT when looking for information about a gynaecological health or cancer concern.

INGO says the findings highlight the importance of ensuring that women can access clear, accurate information and appropriate healthcare advice wherever they begin their search.

Minister for Health, Dr. Jennifer Carroll MacNeill, supported the launch of World GO Day with INGO and said:

“I am delighted to support World GO Day and INGO’s important work to raise awareness of all five gynaecological cancers. The research highlights why it is so important that women know the signs and symptoms and feel confident seeking advice from a healthcare professional.

It is also very welcome to see the European Parliament supporting World GO Day this year, helping to amplify this important message across Europe. I encourage women across Ireland to know the five, know the signs and talk openly about gynaecological health. Greater awareness can help reduce stigma and support earlier diagnosis and better outcomes.”

Claire Thompson, Vice President of the Irish Society of Gynaecological Oncology, added:

“Knowing the signs and symptoms of gynaecological cancer is an important part of looking after your health, but our research also highlights a concerning gap in understanding around cervical screening.”

“While it is encouraging that most women recognise CervicalCheck as a programme for cervical cancer prevention, research carried out earlier this year found that almost one in five women believe it screens for all gynaecological cancers. There is currently no screening programme for the other four gynaecological cancers, making it particularly important that women understand the symptoms and know when to seek medical advice”

In Ireland, World GO Day is coordinated by INGO, a voluntary coordination body bringing together gynaecological cancer campaigners, researchers, healthcare professionals and patient advocates.

This World GO Day, INGO is encouraging women across Ireland to know all five gynaecological cancers, recognise the signs and symptoms, and seek trusted medical advice when needed.

For more information on gynaecological cancers and World GO Day activities in Ireland, visit www.thisisgo.ie.

– ENDS –

For further information and interview requests, please contact: INGO@harrispr.ie

High-resolution photocall imagery and infographics available here: [Media Toolkit](#)

Notes to Editor

About World GO Day

World Gynaecological Oncology Day, known as World GO Day, is an international awareness day for gynaecological cancers, taking place on 20th September each year, organised by ESGO ENGAGE

The day brings together patients, advocates, healthcare professionals and organisations worldwide to raise awareness of gynaecological cancers and encourage conversations about symptoms, risk factors, prevention, early diagnosis and treatment.

In Ireland, INGO coordinates the annual World GO Day campaign, highlighting all five main gynaecological cancers and encouraging women to understand their risk, recognise symptoms and seek appropriate medical advice.

For more information, please visit www.thisisgo.ie

World GO Day Events in Ireland

A range of events and activities are taking place across Ireland in the lead-up to and around World Gynaecological Oncology Day on 20th September, giving women and communities opportunities to learn more about the five gynaecological cancers and show their support for greater awareness. For more information, please visit www.thisisgo.ie

- **Dip or Dance:** The INGO also invites people to join 'Dip or Dance' events across the country. From sea swims to community dances, these events aim to highlight how staying active can help reduce the risk of certain cancers, including uterine cancer. A number of swim events with the purple NCCP sponsored swim hats are taking place in Antrim, Cork, Donegal, Dublin, Galway, Mayo and Waterford.
- **Buildings lighting up for World GO Day:** Buildings across Ireland are also being invited to light up in support of World GO Day.
- **Northern Ireland Trusts campaign:** Across Northern Ireland, each of the five Health and Social Care Trusts will focus on a different gynaecological cancer throughout September as part of a coordinated social media campaign. The campaign will highlight the different cancers, their signs and symptoms, and the importance of awareness. Patient advocacy groups also have the support of Stormont for World GO Day.
- **OvaCare Coffee and Chat – Belfast:** OvaCare will host a Coffee and Chat event at the Europa Hotel in Belfast on 12th September, bringing people together to connect, share experiences and raise awareness of gynaecological cancers. Register on www.ovacare.ie
- **The Emer Casey Foundation: A Legacy of Supporting Excellence in Ovarian and Endometrial Cancer Care at St James's Hospital:** The Emer Casey Foundation will mark 20 years of the foundation with an event at St James's Hospital on 24th September at 5.30pm. Prof Karen Cadoo will speak on "Knowledge is Power: The Importance and Opportunities of Inherited Cancer Genetics". Registration via thecancerinstitute@STJAMES.IE

- **221+ social media campaign:** The 221+ CervicalCheck Patient Support Group also have a new campaign launching called [vickyscall_ireland](#) and will be filming some video content with the INGO around World GO Day as a shared effort for both campaigns
- **Awareness desks in hospitals and Daffodil Centres:** Awareness desks will be held in hospitals and Daffodil Centres across Ireland, providing information and resources on the five gynaecological cancers and the importance of recognising signs and symptoms.

New Irish Research - August 2026

Research conducted by **iReach Insights on behalf of the Irish Network for Gynaecological Oncology (INGO)** surveyed 520 women across Ireland between 6th–13th August 2026.

Key findings:

- **Awareness varies significantly across the five main gynaecological cancers:** cervical (93%), ovarian (92%), uterine (66%), vaginal (54%) and vulva (37%).
- Among women under 45, awareness was lower across all five cancers: cervical (88%), ovarian (87%), uterine (56%), vaginal (47%) and vulva (31%). Among women aged 25–34, awareness of vulva cancer was just 29%.
- **Understanding of personal risk remains limited:** 54% of women believe they could be at risk of developing a gynaecological cancer regardless of age, while 22% are unsure of their risk and 11% have never considered it. Among women aged 25–34, these figures rise to 26% and 19% respectively.
- **Healthcare professionals remain the preferred source of information:** 75% would seek information from a GP or healthcare professional, followed by official health organisations (48%) and women's health clinics (39%).
- **Hospitals and specialist healthcare providers are the most trusted source of information,** ranked by 72% of women, followed by GPs and healthcare professionals (64%) and women's health clinics (56%).
- While only 12% of women overall would use AI/ChatGPT to seek information about gynaecological cancer, this rises to **20% among women aged 18–24**. Just 1% of women rank AI/ChatGPT as their most trusted source of information.
- **4% of women under 45 have not heard of any of the five main gynaecological cancers,** rising to 6% among women aged 18–34.

Gynaecological Cancer in Ireland

Across the island of Ireland, approximately 2,000 cases are diagnosed annually.

In the Republic of Ireland, over 1,400 gynaecological cancers are diagnosed annually, representing almost 12% of female cancers. [i]

In Northern Ireland, approximately 600 gynaecological cancers are diagnosed per year, also representing 12% of female cancers. [ii]

The five main gynaecological cancers are:

1. Vulva cancer
2. Vaginal cancer
3. Cervical cancer

4. Uterine (endometrial/womb) cancer
5. Ovarian cancer

Each cancer has different symptoms, risk factors and approaches to prevention and early detection.

- **Vulva cancer** – Persistent itching, skin changes, sores or lesions on the vulva should be checked by a healthcare professional.
- **Vaginal cancer** – Vaginal cancer is rare. HPV vaccination plays an important role in prevention. Changes to the vaginal area may require assessment by a healthcare professional.
- **Cervical cancer** – Most cervical cancers are caused by human papillomavirus (HPV). Cervical cancer can largely be prevented through HPV vaccination and attending cervical screening when invited. Women should still be aware of symptoms including abnormal vaginal bleeding, unusual discharge or pain during sex and consult a GP where necessary.
- **Uterine (endometrial/womb) cancer** – This is the most common gynaecological cancer. It may be signalled by postmenopausal bleeding or bleeding between periods in younger women.
- **Ovarian cancer** – More than 75% of cases are diagnosed at an advanced stage. There is no reliable screening test, so awareness of persistent symptoms is important. Common symptoms are reflected in the BEAT acronym: Bloating, Eating difficulties, Abdominal pain and Toilet changes.

Confusion around the national cervical screening programme, CervicalCheck, remains a concern. Research carried out by iReach and commissioned by INGO in April 2026 among 1,000 respondents across Ireland found that 74% of women correctly identified CervicalCheck as a program for cervical cancer prevention, while 19% believed it covers all gynaecological cancers. A further 17% believed it screens for vaginal and womb cancer. As there is no screening programme for the other four main gynaecological cancers – ovarian, uterine, vaginal and vulva cancer – the findings highlight the importance of understanding what cervical screening does and does not detect, and being aware of symptoms that may require medical advice.

About INGO

The Irish Network for Gynaecological Oncology (INGO) is a voluntary coordination body consisting of Ireland's foremost gynaecological cancer campaigners, researchers, healthcare professionals and patient advocates. The aim of the group is to raise awareness of gynaecological cancers across the island of Ireland.

The group participates in major international awareness campaigns throughout the year, including World Ovarian Cancer Day on 8th May, Uterine Cancer Awareness Month in June and World Gynaecological Oncology Day on 20th September.

INGO is coordinated by Dr Sharon O'Toole of Trinity St James's Cancer Institute and Yvonne O'Meara of Precision Oncology Ireland, University College Dublin.

Support

The INGO acknowledge the support of the National Cancer Control Programme. OvaCare are grateful for the support received from GlaxoSmithKline, AbbVie and AstraZeneca towards the World GO Day campaign.

INGO Members



Irish Network for
Gynaecological Oncology



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

For more information on INGO, visit www.isgo.ie/irish-network-for-gynaecological-oncology/

[i] National Cancer Registry Ireland: <https://www.ncri.ie/en>

[ii] Northern Ireland Cancer Registry: www.qub.ac.uk/nicr

Partnerships

European Parliament: At European level, World Gynaecological Oncology Day 2026 will be under the patronage of the European Parliament.

Riley: Riley, an Irish, female-founded company that sells sustainable, eco-friendly period care products, has partnered with the Irish Network for Gynaecological Oncology this month to raise awareness of gynaecological cancers and their symptoms.

-ENDS-