

Staging

Staging is the process of finding out how much cancer is in a person's body and where it is located. For most types of cancer, doctors use staging information to help plan treatment and to predict a person's outlook (prognosis). Although each person's situation is different, cancers with the same stage tend to have similar outlooks and are often treated the same way. The cancer stage is also a way for doctors to describe the extent of the cancer when they talk with each other about a person's cancer.

Doctors need to know the amount of cancer and where it is in the body to be able to choose the best treatment options.

Clinical staging is a key part of deciding the best treatment to use. An estimate of the extent of the cancer is made based on results of physical examination, imaging tests (x-rays, CT scans, etc.), and tumour biopsies.

After surgery has been performed, doctors can determine the pathologic stage (also called the surgical stage) of the cancer. The pathologic stage relies on the results of the exams and tests mentioned before, as well as what is learned about the cancer during surgery. Often this is surgery to remove the cancer and nearby lymph nodes, but sometimes surgery may be done to just look at how much cancer is in the body and take out tissue samples.

Sometimes, the pathologic stage is different from the clinical stage (for instance, if the surgery shows the cancer has spread more than was thought). The pathologic stage gives the multidisciplinary care team more precise information that can be used to predict treatment response and outcomes (prognosis).

For more information on the stages relating to the different gynaecological cancer types, see the links to the [Cancer Council](#) booklets for each type of cancer located on this website.