



Ovarian cancer and your finances

Being diagnosed with ovarian cancer can have a big and unexpected impact on your finances. Your costs may go up or your income may fall for lots of different reasons. This booklet aims to give an overview of the possible financial impact of an ovarian cancer diagnosis. It discusses financial considerations and how you can seek support and guidance.

For the most up-to-date advice and more in-depth information about your specific entitlements, please contact the organisations mentioned in the **Where can I find out more?** section at the end of this booklet.

Benefits

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The benefits system is there to help. Whether you are in or out of work it's important to find out whether you are entitled to any extra help as it can really make a difference to your finances. Even if you are already in receipt of benefits a cancer diagnosis and treatments can change the financial help you are entitled to and you may find it increases.

Some benefits are related to the health impact of your ovarian cancer and its treatment, often regardless of your financial circumstances. Of these, some help with possible extra costs resulting from your cancer and others provide a basic income to replace earnings if you feel too unwell or are unable to work.

Other benefits provide more general help, including support with council tax and health costs like the dentist or travel to hospital, but these are related to most other income and savings you – and any partner – may have.

“Money was a big worry for me. I’m a support worker and had only a small amount of sick pay every month. Fortunately, I had support from Carers UK and they helped me apply for carers benefit. I was also entitled to PIP payments.” Lesley

These are known as means tested benefits.

While some means tested benefits only help at quite low income levels, others may go further up the income scale than you might think. So never rule yourself out from potential help.

The support you need and the benefits you are entitled to may change over time. For example, after your diagnosis and while you are still having treatment you may need help because you choose to stop work, or are too unwell to continue. Once your treatment has finished, you may need support to ease back into work or with extra ongoing costs associated with living well.

With so many types of help it can make it hard to find your way around, but there is support available so that you don’t have to do this alone. The organisations listed in the **Where can I find out more?** section will help assess what benefits you may be entitled to and can help you to apply for benefits or challenge a decision about benefits.

Universal Credit (UC) is being introduced in stages across the UK as a single payment replacement for six of the working age income-related benefits (including Housing Benefit and Income Support.) All other benefits remain outside UC. It is important that you get independent advice about what UC means for you and – if you are already in receipt of benefits - whether you need to switch over.

Your pension

Being diagnosed with ovarian cancer may have some impact on your pension if you have a private or occupational pension (separate from the State Pension paid by the UK government). For example, if you choose to stop working and paying into your pension scheme, the final pension amount may be smaller. It's a good idea to check with your current pension scheme to see if your diagnosis causes anything to change and seek guidance before you stop making payments.

Pension schemes fall broadly into two categories:

- Defined pension schemes eg final/average salary schemes – which define the pension you get and the age you can get it.
- Defined contribution schemes - where you and an employer pay a defined contribution into a pension pot but where the final amount depends on factors such as length of contribution and performance.

Some women may have the option to retire and claim their pension early because of ill health. Whether you are able to do this will depend on the type of pension you have and the rules of your scheme, eg there may be more flexibility in a defined pension scheme, especially after the age of 55. If you wish to explore this option you should speak to your pension scheme about whether you can and the implications for the amount of pension you would receive. You may also wish to seek guidance or advice to help you reach a decision to make sure it is right for you and your own circumstances.

You can contact the organisations listed in the **Where can I find out more?** section for more information and impartial guidance or advice on your pensions options. You should also check if you have access to free independent advice via your trade union (if you are a member) or your insurance policies.

Prescription charges

In England, NHS prescriptions are free for people with a cancer diagnosis. You can apply for an exemption certificate using an FP92 form from your GP or hospital. The certificate lasts for five years and can be renewed for as long as you need it. For residents of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland prescriptions are free for everyone (although you may need to get an exemption certificate if you need to access free prescriptions in England.) Residents of England will need their exemption certificate if they need to access free prescriptions in the other nations.



Insurance

An ovarian cancer diagnosis can affect how much you pay in insurance premiums for health, travel or life insurance. Even if you are no longer receiving treatment, cancer is classed as a pre-existing condition meaning you may be given conditions to be insured or even be refused insurance if you try to take out a new insurance policy. This is because insurance companies work out insurance premiums based on the chance of someone claiming on their policy.

Prices and policies can vary so it's important you shop around. If you think you are being treated unfairly you can complain to the Financial Ombudsman. Their details are listed at the end of this booklet.

Health and critical illness insurance

Being diagnosed with ovarian cancer should not affect any existing health or critical illness insurance and if you had this type of insurance before your diagnosis you could be entitled to make a claim. There is usually a time limit on making these claims so it is worth claiming as soon as possible if you are eligible. Whether or not you are eligible will depend on the type of insurance you have and your insurance provider so you will need to speak to your provider for more information about your specific circumstances.

If you did not have insurance prior to your diagnosis you may find it more difficult to get new insurance after you have been diagnosed with cancer. Insurance companies may quote you a very high premium or even refuse to insure you so it's worth looking around and maybe talking to an insurance broker who can advise you on more specialist policies.



Life insurance

An ovarian cancer diagnosis (or any other change in your health) will not affect the premiums that you pay on existing life insurance policies. But if you are applying for a new life insurance policy after your diagnosis you will usually be asked to pay a more expensive premium or may be refused cover. Whether or not you get life insurance and on what terms will depend on the type and stage of your cancer and other health factors. If this is something you want to explore it may be worth speaking to an insurance broker who specialises in arranging life insurance for people with a cancer diagnosis.

Travel insurance

When you apply for travel insurance, cancer is classed as a pre-existing condition even if you are not currently undergoing treatment, or had cancer a long time ago. You may find that standard travel insurance policies exclude you because of your cancer, or exclude any risks associated with your cancer or treatment. Whether you are willing to accept this risk will depend on your personal circumstances but health care abroad can be expensive. There are also more specialist policies available for people with pre-existing health conditions. You may want to ask an insurance broker for advice about the best options for you.

You should be open with your travel insurance provider and ask for their guidance because if you don't tell them about a pre-existing condition and you need to make a claim, they may refuse to pay – even if the claim is unrelated to your cancer.

If you are travelling to Europe you can get a free European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) available via the NHS which allows you to receive medical cover on the same basis as a citizen of the country that you are visiting; having one may be a condition of your insurance or reduce your premium.

It's important to remember that each country's healthcare system is different and may not include all the things that you would expect to get for free on the NHS (eg fees to see a GP or the cost of an ambulance). The EHIC will also not cover the cost of emergency repatriation if you need to return home to the UK. Public health facilities need to be clear that they are treating you on the same basis as a local citizen and make sure you are aware if you have to pay extra. You can apply for a free EHIC card online at **ehic.org.uk**

The organisations in the **Where can I find out more?** section provide further information and advice about insurance after an ovarian cancer diagnosis.

If you found this booklet useful, visit our website for more information and our full range of ovarian cancer guides **targetovariancancer.org.uk**

Where can I find out more?

For information on benefits and your pension

- A Maggie's Benefits Advisor can offer confidential advice about benefits you may be entitled to. Visit your local Maggie's Centre or contact the Online Centre Advisor at **maggiescentres.org**
- A Macmillan Benefits Advisor or Financial Guide can offer specialist impartial advice and guidance on benefits, pensions, insurance, mortgage repayment, grants and loans. Visit **macmillan.org.uk** to find your local Advisor or call **0808 808 00 00** (Monday to Friday from 9am–8pm)
- Pension Wise is a free and impartial government service that offers guidance about personal or workplace pension options. You can book a free appointment with a pension specialist by calling **0800 138 3944** or visiting **pensionwise.gov.uk**
- The Pensions Advisory Service offers free and impartial guidance to people with workplace and personal pensions. You can submit your enquiry at any time of the day or night online at **pensionsadvisoryservice.org.uk** or call **0300 123 1047** (Monday to Friday from 9am – 5pm)

Both Pension Wise and The Pensions Advisory Service are specifically prohibited from advising on the benefit impacts of pension choices so you might want to discuss the pension options you explore with a benefits adviser as well.



- Citizens Advice provides free independent and confidential advice online and in over 3500 locations in the UK – **citizensadvice.org.uk**
- You may also find it useful to talk to an Independent Financial Adviser about your specific circumstances if you have more significant assets and pension plans. Financial advisers charge for their services (unlike the services above) but will be able to make a recommendation that can help you make the most of your pension savings. You can find a financial adviser by contacting one of the following providers:
 - Unbiased – **unbiased.co.uk** or **0800 023 6868**
 - Wayfinder – **financialplanning.org.uk**
 - Personal Finance Society – **thepfs.org**
 - Money Advice Service – **moneyadviceservice.org.uk** or **0800 137 7777**

You should always make sure that any financial adviser you use is authorised. Check their entry on the Financial Services Register at **fca.org.uk**.



For information on insurance including health, travel and life insurance

- The British Insurance Broker's Association (BIBA) can help you find a regulated insurance broker who will then find a suitable insurance provider for you. You can call them on **0370 950 1790** (Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm) or visit **biba.org.uk/find-insurance**
- You may also want to compare insurance policies online using some of the following websites:
 - Which? – **which.co.uk**
 - Money Saving Expert – **moneysavingexpert.com**
 - Money Advice Service – **moneyadviceservice.org.uk** or **0800 137 7777**
 - The Association of British Insurers – **abi.org.uk**
- Online communities such as HealthUnlocked (**healthunlocked.com**) or Macmillan's online community share information about insurance providers used by women with ovarian cancer.

For help with complaints

- The Financial Ombudsman is independent and set up by parliament to help people if they have a dispute with financial providers such as pensions, insurance and loans – **financial-ombudsman.org.uk** or **0300 123 9 123** or **0800 023 4567**.

Find out more

Get in touch for more information, support and signposting for anyone affected by ovarian cancer. Why not register with us to be the first to receive news about our information and events?



Support Line: 020 7923 5475



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targetovariancancer.org.uk

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To access our list of references please contact us.

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