

HEALTH CHECKS

STROKE VICTIMS

If someone is suspected of having a stroke

Do these tests

1. Ask the person to smile
2. Ask the person to lift both arms above their head
3. Ask the person to say a simple sentence—eg:- It is a nice sunny day to-day.

If they fail any of these tests phone 000 immediately.

Strokes caught early may be reversible with few if any impairments.

SIGNS OF OVARIAN CANCER *even in the absence of ovaries.*

Primary Peritoneal Cancer has only recently been identified as a type of cancer, but it is essentially Ovarian Cancer.

Both types of cancer are diagnosed in the same way, with the "tumor marker" CA-125 blood test, and they are treated in the same way - surgery to remove the primary tumour and then chemotherapy.

The "Classic" symptoms are an abdomen that rather suddenly enlarges and constipation and/or diarrhoea.

Because these symptoms seemed to be "abdominal", women are often sent to a gastroenterologist who may test for a bacteria infection. Negative results often result in a diagnosis of "Irritable Bowel Syndrome". However X-ray of an enlarged abdomen may be negative and the next test should be a CT-Scan which may reveal fluid in the abdomen. Tests may reveal cancer cells in the fluid.

Women should insist on an annual CA-125 blood test.

The normal range for a CA-125 blood test is between zero and 35. The CA-125 test is an ovarian screening test equivalent to a man's PSA test prostate screen.

Call your general practitioner to have the test.

It is probable this test should be required just like a PAP smear and mammogram.

CERVICAL CANCER VACCINE APPROVED

The first vaccine to protect against most cervical cancers will be available in Australia by the end of the year following its approval in the United States, its Australian creator predicts. US approval also opens the way for the drug to be available worldwide, University of Queensland scientist and Australian of the Year, immunologist Ian Frazer, said today.

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced the vaccine, called Gardasil, had been approved for use in girls and women aged from nine to 26.

Gardasil protects against the two types of human papillomavirus, or HPV, responsible for about 70 per cent of cervical cancer cases.

The vaccine also blocks infection by two other strains responsible for 90 per cent of genital wart cases.

US approval is a significant step in gaining worldwide approval for the vaccine, manufactured by Melbourne-based biopharmaceutical company CSL Ltd and its licensee Merck and Co Inc.

"It's good news for the vaccine and it's good news for women worldwide," said Professor Frazer.

It was hoped Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration would approve Gardasil in the next couple of months, he said.

"I would think it will be available in Australia by the end of the year – maybe in August or September."

*By Rosemary Desmond
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