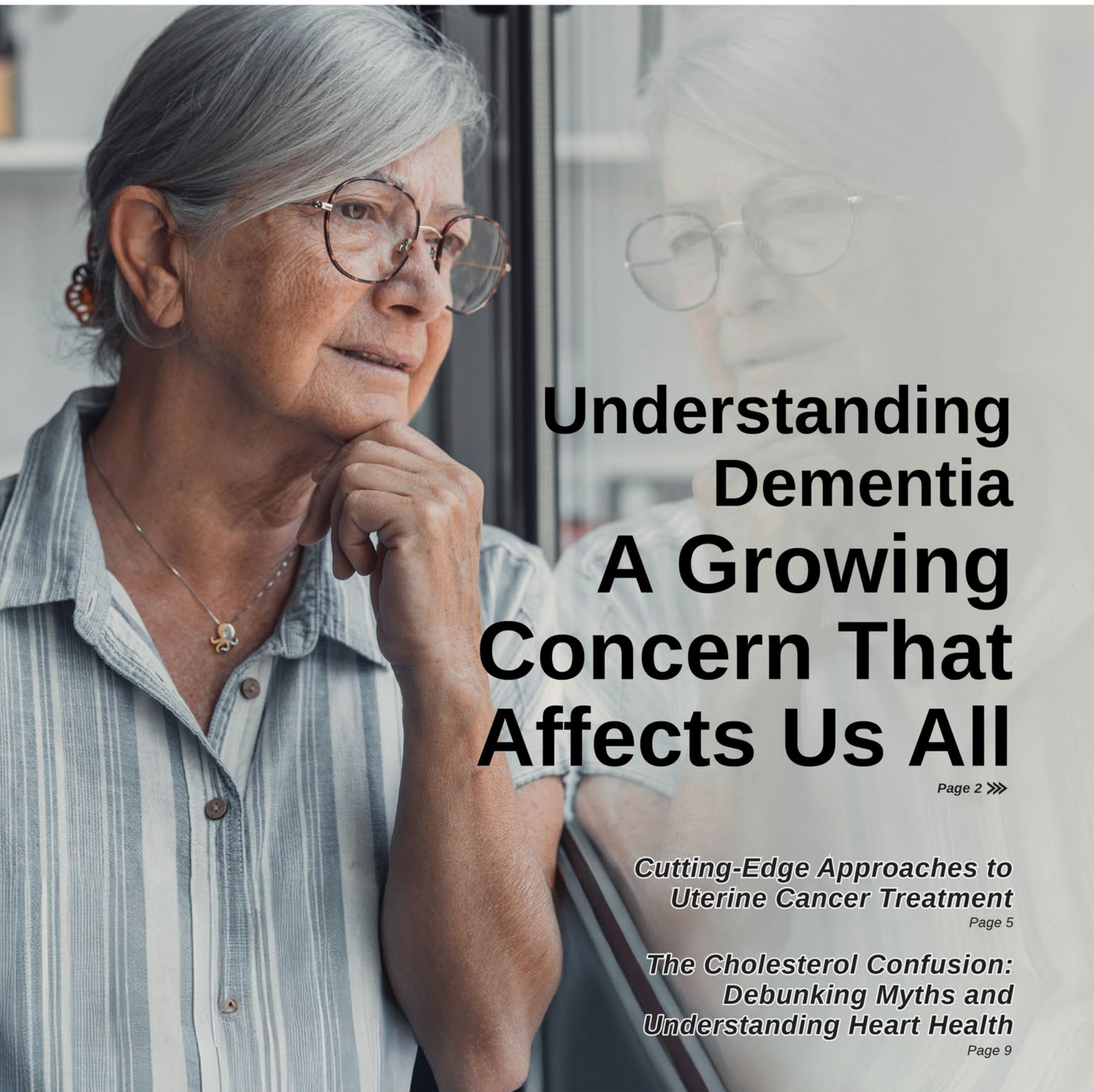


# Live Well & Energize

 南華醫院  
HOSPITAL LAM WAH EE

2nd Biannual 2025



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HEALTH NEWSLETTER

KKLIU 1834/2025

## Understanding Dementia

# A Growing Concern That Affects Us All

Dementia is more than just forgetfulness. It is a serious medical condition marked by a decline in cognitive abilities that affects memory, thinking, behaviour and the ability to perform everyday activities. Associated with ongoing brain function decline, these symptoms interfere with daily life as well as affect relationships.

As our population ages, dementia is becoming increasingly common in Malaysia and around the world. It is estimated that over 55 million people globally live with dementia currently. Nearly 10 million new cases of dementia are reported yearly, indicating a growing public health challenge.

Dementia is not characterised by well-defined states but rather by gradual alterations in crucial cellular signaling pathways in the brain, which ultimately transform an otherwise healthy state into a dysfunctional one due to neurodegeneration. When neurodegeneration occurs, we lose healthy brain cells and brain cell connection. This process leads to deterioration of brain functions.

Understanding this debilitating condition is the first step toward helping our loved ones live with dignity and care.

### Prevalence and Disease Burden

In Malaysia, due to an ageing population, the number of patients suffering from dementia is expected to rise sharply.

As per the 2010 Global Burden of Disease (GBD) estimates, dementia is ranked the 9th most burdensome condition



among people aged 60 years and over. In 2021, 57 million people had dementia worldwide, with 10 million patients diagnosed yearly. It is the 7th leading cause of death globally.

Dementia is not only a medical condition—it also places a heavy emotional, physical and financial burden on families, caregivers and the healthcare system as the complex treatment process features limited efficacy and high costs. Caregivers also experience significant psychological stress and mental burden, particularly as the condition progresses, leading to increased dependency.



Difficulty with planning or solving problems



Changes in mood, personality or behaviour



Struggling with speech or understanding language

These symptoms interfere with daily life and are not just part of “normal ageing” as commonly believed. They affect patients’ ability to perform activities of daily living (ADL).

### Common Causes

Dementia is not a single disease, but a general term for conditions that cause problems with memory and thinking. The most common causes include:

- Alzheimer’s disease** the most common type, causing slow and progressive memory loss.
- Vascular dementia** often due to strokes or reduced blood flow to the brain.
- Lewy body dementia** associated with abnormal protein deposits in the brain.
- Frontotemporal dementia** affecting behaviour and language more than memory.

Some conditions that cause dementia-like symptoms (e.g. vitamin deficiencies, thyroid problems) are reversible, so early medical evaluation is essential.

### Symptoms

Dementia symptoms may start subtly and worsen over time. Common symptoms or signs include:



Forgetting names, dates or recent events



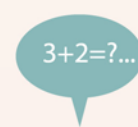
Repeating the same question



Getting lost in familiar places

### Disabilities Caused by Dementia

As dementia progresses, it usually leads to significant disabilities, such as:



Inability to manage personal finances



Difficulty preparing meals or maintaining hygiene



Loss of ability to dress, bathe or use the toilet without help



Wandering or unsafe behaviour



Inability to recognise family members or familiar places

Ultimately, a person with advanced dementia becomes fully dependent on others for care. Understanding the disabilities and potential trajectory of the condition helps the caregiver to better cope with the burden of care, while anticipating future needs.

### Treatment

There is currently no cure for most types of dementia, but treatment might help slow the progression and improve quality of life:

Medications, such as donepezil or memantine might help temporarily improve symptoms and slow the progression of disease.

Behavioural therapy can help manage agitation, anxiety or sleep issues.

Cognitive stimulation, such as puzzles, games, music and conversation can keep the brain active and might slow progression.

Routine and structure can help reduce confusion and anxiety.

It is important to note that early diagnosis and a structured care plan are crucial in managing the illness effectively.

## Caregiver's Burden

Caring for someone with dementia is emotionally and physically demanding. Many caregivers experience:



Stress and exhaustion



Financial strain



Feelings of guilt, isolation or depression

As their role is vital to the support of individuals with dementia, it is important for caregivers to seek support, take breaks and consider professional care when needed. Acknowledging one's limitation and willingness to seek help can lessen the psychological impact of being a caregiver.

## Prevention

While not all dementia can be prevented, some lifestyle changes may reduce risk:

Control high blood pressure, diabetes and cholesterol

Stay mentally and socially active

Exercise regularly

Eat a balanced diet; avoid excessive sugar intake

Avoid smoking and limit alcohol use

Healthy social connection that prevent a sense of loneliness

Remember, a healthy body supports a healthy brain.

## The Importance of Nursing Care and Living Assistance

As dementia progresses, professional nursing care and assisted living support become essential. These services provide:

24/7 supervision for safety

Assistance with daily activities (bathing, eating, mobility)

Medication management

Social interaction and mental stimulation

Emotional support for both patient and family

Families often struggle to provide this level of care at home. Specialised dementia care facilities or trained in-home nursing services can make a significant difference in the quality of life for both the patient and the caregiver.

## Conclusion

Dementia is not just a disease—it is a journey that affects the entire family. Recognising the signs early, seeking medical help and planning proper care can help people with dementia live longer and enjoy safer and more meaningful lives.

Caregiver burden and needs must not be overlooked as well. As a society, we must also acknowledge the value of professional nursing care and assisted living, which offer not only comfort and dignity to patients, but also much-needed relief to families.

If you suspect someone you love is showing signs of dementia, don't wait. Talk to your doctor, get an assessment and begin planning the care they deserve.



Dr Koh Chin Hong,  
Consultant Psychiatrist

# Cutting-Edge Approaches to Uterine Cancer Treatment

## What are the symptoms of uterine cancer?

Uterine cancer (also called womb cancer) is a type of cancer that usually starts in the lining of the womb, which is called the endometrium. In rare cases, it can also affect the muscles of the womb. In Malaysia, womb cancer is the fifth most common cancer among women.

This cancer mostly happens to older women, especially after menopause. However, younger women can also be affected, particularly if they have certain genetic conditions like Lynch syndrome or if they have a personal or family history of bowel cancer.

Women with womb cancer often notice symptoms such as bleeding after menopause or unusual vaginal discharge. Other signs may include lower belly pain, bleeding after sex, feeling bloated, a growing lump in the tummy area, a heavy or pressured feeling in the vagina, unexpected weight loss and feeling very tired.

## Who is at risk of uterine cancer?

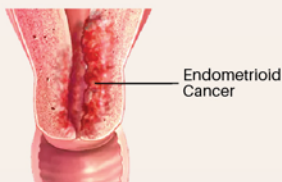
Uterine cancer is becoming more common not only in Western countries but also here in Malaysia. This rise is linked to certain health conditions such as diabetes, obesity (being very overweight), high blood pressure, and the use of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) without progesterone. The good news



is that many of these risk factors can be managed or changed to help lower the chances of womb cancer.

There are also inherited (genetic) risks. One example is Lynch syndrome, a genetic condition passed down in families that increases the risk of womb cancer as well as other cancers like bowel and ovarian cancer. Women with a strong family history of bowel cancer or cancers of the female organs should consider screening for Lynch syndrome, which can be detected through a genetic test.

### What are the different types of womb cancer?



There are several types of womb cancer. The most common type is called endometrioid cancer, which starts in the lining of the womb. There are also less common types that come from the lining, including

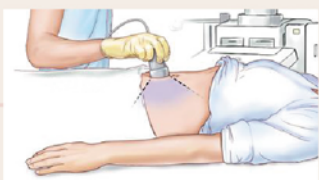
serous, clear cell, carcinosarcoma, mixed Mullerian, and dedifferentiated cancers. These types tend to grow and spread more quickly than endometrioid cancer.

Womb cancer can also start in the muscle of the womb, which are called sarcomas. This type is rare but can sometimes develop from abnormal growths called fibroids. Fibroids are non-cancerous lumps in the muscle of the womb. They are common and often cause symptoms like heavy periods or trouble getting pregnant.



Sometimes, fibroids can grow very large and cause pain or pressure. If a fibroid starts growing very quickly, this could be a warning sign of sarcoma and should be addressed by seeing a doctor for further tests.

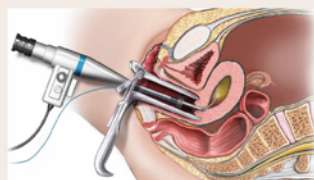
### What investigations can I expect?



Women with symptoms associated with womb cancer will undergo an examination by a gynaecologist, along with an ultrasound scan. If appropriate, a biopsy will also be

taken from the lining of the womb using very fine tubes (Pipelle biopsy) in a clinic.

For some patients, a hysteroscopy may be required; whereby a telescopic camera is passed through the vagina and neck of the womb (cervix) to assess the lining of the womb and take more



precise biopsies. This is usually performed as a day case procedure in the operating theatre under general or regional anaesthesia. Once a diagnosis of uterine cancer is confirmed, patients will undergo an MRI or CT scan to assess for any potential cancer spread.

### What is the treatment for womb cancers?

The treatment will depend on the type of cancer and the stage it is in. Fortunately, most cases of womb cancer are diagnosed early and surgery is usually curative. Surgery aims to remove the womb, both ovaries, fallopian tubes and cervix.

In the past, doctors would also remove many lymph nodes (small glands along the major blood vessels in the pelvis) to check if the cancer had spread. This is because very small cancer cells are not visible on the MRI or CT scan and can be easily missed. Unfortunately, removing all these lymph nodes can sometimes cause leg swelling, which can affect quality of life.

Nowadays, with the recent advancement in surgical technology, we are able to identify the "sentinel lymph nodes". The sentinel node is the first lymph node which the cancer drains to and this can be detected with a fluorescent dye, Indocyanine green (ICG), injected at the cervix at the start of surgery. ICG can be visualised using a specialised camera that emits near-infrared light (Figure 1). In contrast to the removal of all lymph nodes, only one to two nodes are removed and this minimises the risk of complications.

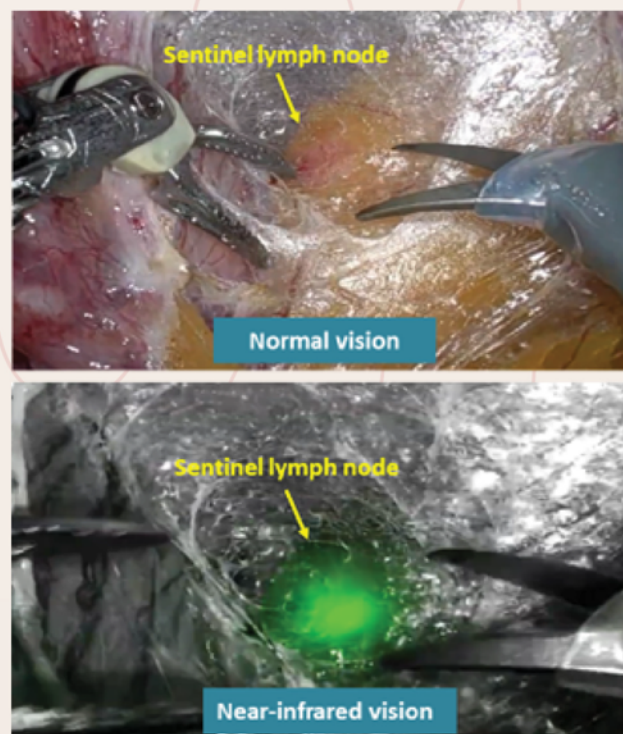


Figure 1: Sentinel lymph node detection  
Indocyanine green dye (ICG) is used to identify the sentinel lymph node during keyhole surgery. A special camera emits near-infrared (NIR) light, which can be switched on and off during the procedure. When the NIR light is on, the fluorescent green dye becomes visible, allowing the surgeon to precisely remove only the lymph node(s) that light up green.

## What about keyhole surgery?

Historically, surgery was performed through an open approach (laparotomy) whereby an incision is either made vertically, or along the bikini line (Pfannenstiel). Open surgery is generally more painful, has a higher chance of bleeding or blood clots and has longer recovery times. For women who are overweight, there is a higher risk of wound infection, which can delay further treatments like chemotherapy or radiotherapy.

Laparoscopic (keyhole) surgery is a less invasive approach, which generally means less pain, a faster recovery and patients often go home the next day. It also allows patients to start additional treatments sooner if needed. Almost all women with womb cancer can now be treated with keyhole surgery, but open surgery may still be necessary for very large tumours or more advanced cases. Studies have consistently shown that gynaecological cancer surgeries performed by gynaecologic oncology specialists are associated with improved survival rates and better patient outcomes compared to surgeries performed by non-specialists.



Figure 2: Small openings used in keyhole surgery

Five small incisions are made in the abdomen to insert small tubes (called ports). The surgeon inserts specialised instruments and a tiny camera through these ports to perform the surgery. Carbon dioxide gas is used to gently inflate the abdomen, creating space for the procedure.

## What to expect in keyhole surgery

Keyhole surgery is commonly used not only to treat womb (endometrial) cancer but also other gynaecological cancers, including those affecting the ovaries and cervix. It is also widely performed for benign gynaecological conditions such as fibroids, ovarian cysts, endometriosis and others.

During this type of surgery, the surgeon usually makes 4 to 5 small cuts in your tummy. Through these cuts, ports are placed so that special instruments and a tiny camera can be inserted. To make space for the surgery, the tummy is gently inflated with carbon dioxide gas. When the operation is finished, the gas is let out and the instruments are removed. The small cuts are closed with stitches and they usually heal within about a week (Figure 3).

Most people recover quickly after keyhole surgery. You'll usually be able to eat, drink and move around not long after you wake up. In most cases, patients can go home within 1 or 2 days after the operation.

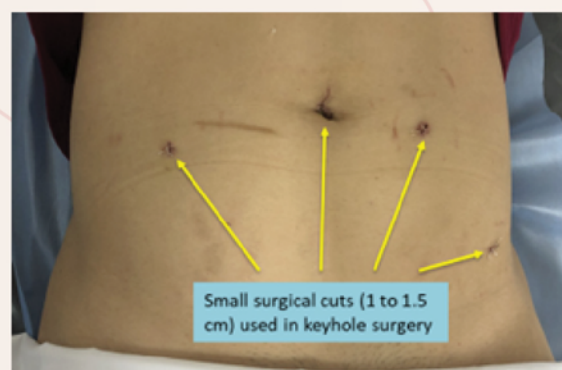


Figure 3: Wound from keyhole surgery

After keyhole surgery, four small cuts, each about 1 to 1.5 cm long, are closed with stitches. These tiny wounds usually heal within 7 to 10 days.

## Is a hysterectomy the only option?

Some women are diagnosed with a condition called endometrial hyperplasia with atypia, which means there are abnormal changes in the womb lining that could lead to cancer. This is more common in women who are overweight or have genetic conditions like Lynch syndrome.

For women who do not want to have children anymore, a hysterectomy (removal of the womb) is usually recommended to prevent cancer from developing.

However, for women who want to have children in the future, there are other options. Hormone treatments can sometimes help reverse these early changes, but this requires close monitoring with regular scans and check-ups every 3 to 4 months.

Young women who are diagnosed with early womb cancer and wish to keep their fertility may also be able to try hormone therapy. This should be done at specialised centres where doctors can carefully watch the cancer to make sure it is getting better and does not progress.

In most cases, once the woman has had children, a hysterectomy is still recommended to reduce the risk of cancer coming back.

## What other treatments are available besides surgery?

In addition to surgery, there are other treatments that can help treat womb cancer or reduce the risk of it coming back. These include hormone therapy, chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

Radiotherapy uses high-energy rays to kill cancer cells. It can be given inside the vagina (called brachytherapy) or from outside the body (external beam therapy), especially if the cancer has spread to lymph nodes or is more advanced.

Chemotherapy uses medicines to kill cancer cells and is usually given for more aggressive types of womb cancer, such as serous, clear cell or carcinosarcoma. Sometimes chemotherapy is given before surgery to shrink the tumour and make the operation easier.

Hormone therapy can be used after surgery to lower the chance of cancer returning or to help control symptoms like heavy bleeding if the cancer cannot be removed completely.

Thanks to advances in genetic testing, doctors can now look at specific markers in the tumour to help choose the best treatments, including new options like immunotherapy that use the body's immune system to fight the cancer.

gynaecological cancers and pre-cancerous conditions. Early diagnosis can make a big difference, helping treatment start sooner and improving survival.



### Know the symptoms, reduce the risk



bleeding



abnormal vaginal discharge



after menopause

Fortunately, most women with uterine cancers will be diagnosed early and surgery is curative. If you experience symptoms of bleeding and abnormal vaginal discharge, especially after menopause or if you are affected by symptoms such as persistent irregular and heavy menstrual bleeding, then you should consult a gynaecologist urgently for further investigations. Women with a strong family history of gynaecological and bowel cancer should also discuss their risk of cancer with a gynaecologist and consider risk-reducing procedures to prevent the development of womb cancer.

### What Hospital Lam Wah Ee offers

At Hospital Lam Wah Ee, we provide specialist care and treatment for all types of gynaecological cancers, including cancers of the womb, cervix and ovaries. Our experienced team also performs keyhole surgery (minimally invasive surgery) for these cancers, which often means smaller cuts, less pain and a quicker recovery.

We also offer keyhole surgery for non-cancerous (benign) gynaecological conditions, such as fibroids, ovarian cysts and endometriosis.

In addition, through our dedicated Health Screening Centre, we provide screening and early detection services for



Dr Jason Yap Ker Wei,  
Consultant Obstetrician, Gynaecologist and  
Gynaecological Oncology Specialist

# The Cholesterol Confusion: Debunking Myths and Understanding Heart Health

**Did you know your body actually needs cholesterol to stay alive?**



For many years, cholesterol has been blamed for heart disease and clogged arteries. Because of this, “cholesterol-free” labels are everywhere and many people think all cholesterol is bad. However, that’s not the full story.

Cholesterol is important for your body. It helps to build cells, produce hormones and vitamin D. Still, many people are confused because we often hear about “good” and “bad” cholesterol.

Let’s debunk common myths about cholesterol and look at what cholesterol really does, how it affects the heart and what truly matters for keeping your heart healthy.

## Myth 01 All cholesterol is bad for your health

Not all cholesterol is bad for your health. In fact, your body needs cholesterol in the right amounts for good health.

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance that comes from two main sources:

### Liver production

About 80% of cholesterol in your body is produced by the liver.

### Dietary sources

The remaining 20% of cholesterol comes from foods derived from animals, such as offal, meat, seafood, eggs, poultry and dairy products.

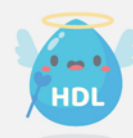
Cholesterol travels through your blood with the help of carriers called lipoproteins.

These carriers are tiny particles made up of fat and protein. There are two main types of lipoproteins that most people often hear about:



**LDL cholesterol (*Low-density lipoprotein*):** Often called the “bad” cholesterol, it makes up most of the cholesterol in your body and carries it to your cells.

If there is too much LDL, it can stick to your artery walls and form plaque (fatty build-up). Over time, this can block the blood flow and increase the risk of heart attack, stroke or other problems.



**HDL cholesterol (*High-density lipoprotein*):** Known as the “good” cholesterol, it helps clean up extra cholesterol in your blood by carrying it back to the liver, where it’s removed from your body.

Higher levels of HDL can help protect you from heart disease.

Apart from cholesterol, there is also triglycerides (TG), another type of fat in your blood. Your body uses triglycerides for energy, but when levels are too high, it can contribute to cholesterol plaque build-up in the arteries and raise the risk of heart disease.

**!** Risk of heart attack and other health problems increases when:



**Myth 02** Cholesterol level depends on what you eat

Dietary choices do affect cholesterol level, but it is not the only factor.

There are some other factors that may increase cholesterol level, including:

- Sedentary lifestyle or lack of regular exercise
- Being overweight
- Smoking
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Ageing
- Family history of high cholesterol
- Health problems like diabetes or high blood pressure
- Not getting enough good sleep

Therefore, it is still very important to follow a healthy lifestyle to help lower your risk of heart attack, stroke or other medical problems.

**Myth 03** Eggs should be avoided as eating eggs raises your blood cholesterol



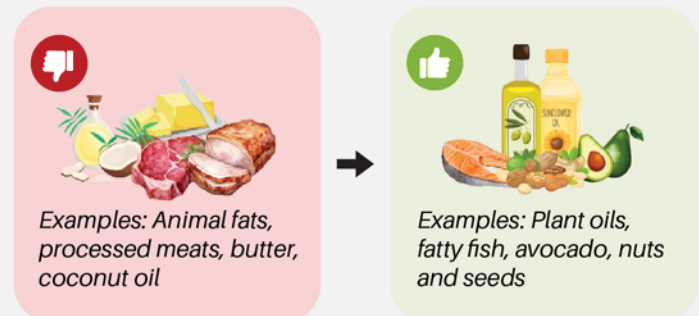
Eggs do have cholesterol, but they are also rich in nutrients and high quality protein. Current dietary guidelines suggest focusing on overall healthy eating instead of just avoiding dietary cholesterol. Eating eggs in moderation, as

part of a healthy diet with foods like fish, poultry and lean meat is not linked to a higher risk of heart disease for most people.

Notably, the health impact of eggs may depend on overall dietary patterns and preparation methods. For example, in Western diets, where eggs are often fried and consumed with processed meats and refined grains, egg consumption may be linked to higher risk of heart disease. In contrast, in Asian dietary patterns, where eggs are typically boiled or eaten with vegetables, the associated risk of heart disease appears lower.

**Myth 04** "No cholesterol" foods are always heart-healthy

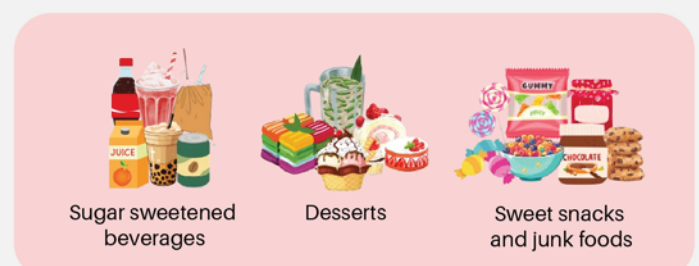
Not all foods with "no cholesterol" labels are always heart-healthy. They may contain high saturated fat, trans fat or even added sugar that increase risk of heart disease.



**Saturated fat**, found in animal foods and some plant oils, is solid at room temperature. Too much saturated fat can raise bad cholesterol and increase risk of heart disease. Replacing saturated fat with healthy unsaturated fats can help protect your heart.



**Trans fats** are made from oils turned into solid fats to improve shelf life and texture. Avoid trans fats as they raise LDL cholesterol, lower HDL cholesterol and increase heart disease risk.



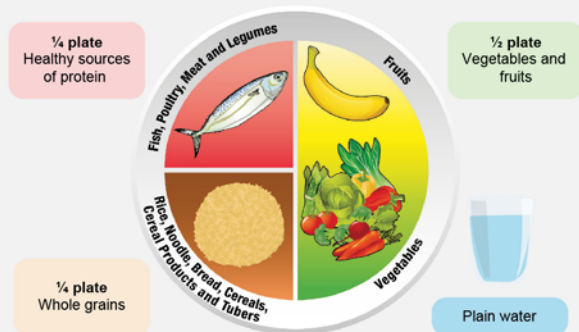
**Added sugars** are sugars added during food processing or preparation. Eating too much sugar raises triglyceride and increases risk of heart disease.

Therefore, it's important to check food labels for saturated fat, trans fat, and added sugar. Also, pay attention to the serving size — nutrition facts may be based on a portion smaller than the whole package.

Myth  
05

**If you're on cholesterol medicine, you don't need to change your diet or lifestyle**

Medicine helps, but it's not enough on its own. To lower your risk of heart disease and stroke, you still have to lead a healthy diet and lifestyle.



**Practice a healthy dietary pattern.** A healthy dietary pattern is good for everyone and helps lower the risk of heart disease. The #QuarterQuarterHalf diet (Malaysian Healthy Plate concept) is a great single meal guide for healthy eating. Follow the Malaysian Healthy Plate concept, choose a wide variety of vegetables and fruits, whole grains and healthy sources of protein (e.g. fish, poultry, lean meat, low-fat/ fat-free dairy products and plant-based proteins) and drink plenty of plain water (6-8 glasses) each day.



**Stay physically active.** Get at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise each week, or a mix of both. Spread your workouts over a few days. Regular exercise can lower LDL cholesterol, total cholesterol and triglycerides, while raising HDL cholesterol.



**Do not drink or limit drinking alcohol.** It is best to avoid alcohol, but if you choose to drink, do not

exceed 1 drink/ day (for females) or 2 drinks/ day (for males). When your body processes alcohol, it turns into triglycerides, which can raise your cholesterol.



**Avoid smoking,** vaping and using tobacco or nicotine products. They damage blood vessels, cause plaque buildup and increase the risk of heart attacks.



**Get adequate good sleep.** Most adults need 7 to 8 hours of good-quality sleep each night to support heart health and healthy cholesterol levels. Too little sleep may lead to higher LDL cholesterol and lower HDL cholesterol.

**Bottom Line**

Cholesterol isn't the enemy — it's essential for your body, but balance is important. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle with good nutrition, regular exercise, limited alcohol intake, no smoking and getting enough sleep helps manage cholesterol and protect your heart.



By Ms. Ng Pei Wen,  
Registered Dietitian  
MAHPC(DTN)00960

### Who is a dietitian?

A dietitian is knowledgeable in food, nutrition and health. A dietitian can also help you develop a personal nutrition plan to improving your eating habits. They can also make the process fun.

Dietitians at Hospital Lam Wah Ee provide practical dietary counseling in the following areas:

- Heart Diseases (Hypertension and Hypercholesterolemia)
- Weight Management (Overweight and Underweight)
- Diabetes Mellitus (Type 1 and 2, and Gestational Diabetes)
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome (Low FODMAP Diet)
- Kidney Diseases
- Liver Diseases
- Gout
- Cancer
- Eating Disorders (Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa)
- Pre and Post-surgical Nutrition Support
- Home Enteral (Tube Feeding) Nutrition Planning

If you are interested to know more, kindly contact +604-652 8989 to speak to our Dietitian or e-mail us at [dietitian@hlwe.com](mailto:dietitian@hlwe.com).



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