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Epidemiology and risk assessment for ovarian cancer.

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The incidence of ovarian cancer varies internationally with higher rates among women of North America and northern Europe. In the United States, there has been relatively little change in the incidence of ovarian cancer in recent decades. The incidence rate of ovarian cancer is highest among white and Hawaiian women, intermediate among African-American, Hispanic and Asian-American women, and lowest among Native American women. The most intensively studied risk factors have been family history, pregnancy history, and oral contraceptive use. Multiparity, lactation, oral contraceptive use, and tubal ligation/hysterectomy all decrease a woman's risk of ovarian cancer. One exposure that has been consistently associated with increased ovarian cancer risk is cosmetic talc applied to the perineum.