

Name of the test

CA-125 (Cancer Antigen 125)

What is this test used for?

This test measures the amount of CA-125 in the blood. CA-125 is a protein which is present on the surface of ovarian cancer cells and therefore, it can be used as a tumor marker.

CA-125 levels are often elevated when a patient has ovarian cancer. This test is used to monitor the treatment for ovarian cancer and detect its recurrence.

However, CA-125 is not usually used for screening purposes, because it can be elevated during other conditions as well - pregnancy, menstruation and some other types of cancer.

When is the test ordered?

CA-125 is performed, when the patient is diagnosed with ovarian cancer. If CA-125 is elevated, the test is ordered regularly to monitor the disease and detect recurrence.

In this case, CA-125 can be used as a marker and may be ordered before, during and after therapy for ovarian cancer.

If a woman is diagnosed with ovarian cancer, but CA-125 levels are normal, then this means the cancer is not producing CA-125 and the test will not be useful for monitoring the treatment or detecting recurrence.

How is this test performed?

A blood sample is taken from a vein.

How to prepare for the test

No preparation is needed.

Interpretation of results

The result of the CA-125 test, performed before starting the therapy, usually serves as a baseline.

If CA-125 levels decrease during the treatment, this means that cancer is responding to therapy. If CA-125 levels remain high, then the therapy may not be successful.

If the baseline is normal, this indicates that cancer is not producing CA-125 and the latter cannot be used as a marker.