**Blood test spots ovarian cancer: Check every four months for women who are at high risk of the disease can detect nine in ten cases**

* **Nearly 4,000 women a year have their ovaries removed as a precaution**
* **Mutated BRCA1 gene raises risk of ovarian cancer from 1.3 to 39 per cent**
* **Angelina Jolie, who carries the gene, had her breasts and ovaries removed**

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A blood test every four months could help spot ovarian [**cancer**](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/cancer/index.html)in women who are highly susceptible to the disease, researchers say.

Women with high genetic risk, such as Angelina Jolie who carries a mutated BRCA gene, are advised to have their ovaries removed.

Nearly 4,000 a year do so in the UK, but many rule out the operation which makes them infertile.

**A blood test every four months could help spot ovarian cancer in women who are highly susceptible to the disease, researchers say**

A study led by University College London shows testing these women every four months is a safe way of catching cancer early.

Researchers stressed surgery is the safest option, but found a blood test for protein CA 125 spots nine in ten cases before the cancer spreads.

The study in the Journal of Clinical Oncology tested 4,000 women with more than a 10 per cent risk.

Researcher Dr Adam Rosenthal said: ‘The screening appears to be very effective at detecting ovarian cancer before it causes symptoms.

‘The proportion of women who had all their tumours removed was very high, which is important in terms of predicting a better outcome.’

Co-author Professor Usha Menon said for high-risk women not having surgery, the test ‘may be a better option than the NHS practice of symptom awareness and ad hoc annual screening’.

Removal of the ovaries and fallopian tubes is usually advised in the case of a mutated BRCA1 gene, which raises the risk of ovarian cancer from 1.3 per cent to 39 per cent.

But recent advances in genetic science have unveiled a number of other genes which also increase ovarian cancer risk - including mutations of the BCRA2, RAD51C, RAD51D, and BRIP1 genes.

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Interest in genetic risk soared after Miss Jolie, 41, famously chose to have her breasts, ovaries and fallopian tubes removed to reduce her cancer risk, after her mother died of ovarian cancer aged just 56.

Referrals for genetic testing doubled in Britain in the two months after Miss Jolie announced she underwent the first of her procedures in 2013.

Athena Lamnisos, chief executive of The Eve Appeal, a cancer charity which co-funded the study, said: ‘Knowing that you are at high risk of developing ovarian cancer is a huge stress for women and their families.

‘This research gives women hope and confidence that there is an evidence-based approach to screening if they decide to delay risk-reducing surgery.’

Ovarian cancer is the fifth most common cancer among British women, with more than 7,000 diagnosed each year, and 4,300 women dying as a result.

Jo Stanford, cancer prevention officer at research charity Ovarian Cancer Action, and who has a BRCA1 gene mutation, said: ‘While this research gives us hope, it’s not yet concrete enough.

‘Until a time when there is a definitive screening programme, the greatest risk reduction for high-risk women like us is still through preventative surgery.’