# Alex Kingston's openness shines a light on rising womb cancer cases and the urgent need for awareness



Strictly Come Dancing star Alex Kingston has bravely shared her recent experience of undergoing a hysterectomy after being diagnosed with womb cancer last year, a revelation that highlights an alarming rise in the incidence of this disease. Womb cancer, also known as endometrial or uterine cancer, has doubled in cases over the past two decades, yet awareness remains worryingly low among women in the UK. Kingston’s story underscores the critical need for greater public education about the disease’s symptoms and risks to improve early diagnosis and survival outcomes.

Despite its increasing prevalence, womb cancer is still under-recognised: research indicates that one in five women in the UK have never heard of it, while over a third mistakenly believe it can be detected through routine smear tests. The latter misconception is particularly dangerous, as smear tests screen for cervical cancer but do not detect womb cancer, leading to delays in diagnosis. As Cath Kennedy, a clinical specialist at Peaches Womb Cancer Trust, stresses, recognising symptoms early is vital, as over 90 percent of women diagnosed at an early stage survive for at least five years, compared with just 15 percent for those diagnosed at stage three or beyond. Cancer Research UK adds that 77 percent of women now survive at least five years post-treatment, highlighting improvements but also the continuing disparities based on detection timing.

Kingston, 62, who experienced alarming symptoms including bloating, achiness, and eventually haemorrhaging on stage, has become a vocal advocate for uterine cancer awareness. She advised women to listen closely to their bodies and not dismiss unusual changes as mere signs of ageing or hormonal fluctuations. "Your body does try to warn you. It just depends on whether you can read the warning signs," she told The Independent. Often mistaken for benign conditions like fibroids or urinary tract infections, womb cancer’s early symptoms—in particular, abnormal vaginal bleeding—must be carefully monitored. Dr Sangeeta Khinder, a consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist, emphasises that post-menopausal bleeding or heavy periods warrant prompt medical attention, even if smear tests are clear.

Womb cancer typically originates in the lining of the uterus but can also develop in the muscle layer as uterine sarcoma, which is more challenging to treat. Common symptoms include abnormal vaginal bleeding, especially after menopause, unusual vaginal discharge, and bleeding between periods. According to NHS data, womb cancer affects approximately 9,700 women annually in the UK and is often called a "silent killer" due to its subtle early symptoms and increasing mortality rate if diagnosed late.

Risk factors contributing to the rise in womb cancer include age—most cases are diagnosed in women post-menopause in their 50s and 60s—obesity, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), and use of oestrogen-only hormone replacement therapy. Obesity, in particular, is a significant driver, as highlighted by Cancer Research UK, which stresses that maintaining a healthy weight can be a preventative measure. Alex Kingston’s diagnosis reflects these realities; she had experienced symptoms for some time but initially attributed them to ageing until the severity forced medical intervention.

Treatment for womb cancer usually involves surgery to remove the uterus, known as a hysterectomy, which Kingston underwent. For younger women, this procedure induces menopause. Adjuvant therapies such as radiotherapy are also common to eliminate remaining cancer cells and reduce recurrence risk, though these treatments carry side effects like fatigue, bladder inflammation, and vaginal bleeding. Despite the difficulty of the journey, Kingston described feeling a renewed sense of self soon after surgery, which enabled her to pursue her ambitions, including competing on Strictly Come Dancing.

The experience of Alex Kingston brings needed attention to gynaecological cancers broadly, which collectively claim the lives of around 8,000 women annually in the UK, averaging 21 fatalities daily. These cancers—including ovarian, cervical, womb, vaginal, and vulval—are more prevalent after menopause, although cervical cancer tends to affect younger women predominantly. While cervical screening programmes have traditionally maintained higher uptake rates, recent data reveal a decline in participation, underscoring the need for sustained public health messaging.

Kingston’s story is a clarion call for women to take symptoms seriously and seek medical advice early. Given the stark contrast in survival rates based on early versus late diagnosis, increased awareness and education are crucial to reducing the toll of this disease. Medical experts agree that persistent abnormal bleeding, unusual discharge, or any deviation in menstrual patterns after menopause should never be ignored. The hope is that through stories like Kingston’s and concerted public health efforts, knowledge will improve, leading to earlier diagnoses and better outcomes for more women.

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* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-15180503/Gynaecologist-womb-cancer-Alex-Kingston.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/womb-cancer/causes)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-15180503/Gynaecologist-womb-cancer-Alex-Kingston.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/womb-cancer/survival), [[4]](https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/womb-cancer/symptoms)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-15180503/Gynaecologist-womb-cancer-Alex-Kingston.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/womb-cancer/symptoms)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-15180503/Gynaecologist-womb-cancer-Alex-Kingston.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/womb-cancer/symptoms), [[5]](https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/womb-cancer/diagnosis)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-15180503/Gynaecologist-womb-cancer-Alex-Kingston.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/womb-cancer/causes), [[7]](https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/womb-cancer/prevention)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-15180503/Gynaecologist-womb-cancer-Alex-Kingston.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/womb-cancer/treatment)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-15180503/Gynaecologist-womb-cancer-Alex-Kingston.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/womb-cancer/treatment)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-15180503/Gynaecologist-womb-cancer-Alex-Kingston.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-15180503/Gynaecologist-womb-cancer-Alex-Kingston.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/womb-cancer/survival> - This page from Cancer Research UK provides detailed information on womb cancer survival rates, highlighting that 77% of women now live at least five years after treatment. It also discusses factors influencing survival and the importance of early detection.
3. <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/womb-cancer/causes> - Cancer Research UK outlines various risk factors for womb cancer, including obesity, which is considered a significant contributor to the rise in cases. The page emphasizes the need for awareness and preventive measures.
4. <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/womb-cancer/symptoms> - This resource details the common symptoms of womb cancer, such as abnormal vaginal bleeding, and stresses the importance of consulting a GP if these symptoms occur, to facilitate early detection and treatment.
5. <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/womb-cancer/diagnosis> - Cancer Research UK explains the diagnostic process for womb cancer, including the role of pelvic examinations, ultrasounds, and biopsies, to accurately diagnose the condition and plan appropriate treatment.
6. <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/womb-cancer/treatment> - This page provides information on treatment options for womb cancer, such as surgery, radiotherapy, and chemotherapy, tailored to the stage and type of cancer, aiming to offer the best possible outcomes.
7. <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/womb-cancer/prevention> - Cancer Research UK discusses preventive measures for womb cancer, including maintaining a healthy weight, as obesity is a known risk factor, and staying informed about personal health to reduce the risk of developing the disease.