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## Aurora woman walks for ovarian cancer

Jackie Thompson considers herself one of the lucky ones.

In 2003, the Aurora resident didn't have a clue she had ovarian cancer, but her abdomen was growing and she had cysts.

"(Ovarian cancer) wasn't on my radar or the doctor's," she said. "It doesn't even cross your mind that's what could be wrong with you."

As fate would have it, Ms Thompson went to the hospital to get a hysterectomy and when she woke-up in the recovery room, she was informed she had ovarian cancer.

It was a nerve-racking two weeks for her and her husband until she found out the tumour was a non-invasive, low malignancy type.



**Raising awareness.** Jackie Thompson is participating in Saturday's Walk of Hope for Ovarian Cancer Canada. *Steve Somerville*

Ms Thompson hardly considers herself a cancer survivor because she never had to do chemotherapy or radiation.

When she had her hysterectomy, her ovaries were removed and the cancer wasn't able to spread.

Now, she's helping spread the word about the disease so other women can catch it early.

This Saturday, Ms Thompson is joining other Aurora residents in the Walk of Hope to raise money for Ovarian Cancer Canada.

It is the sixth year of the Aurora Walk of Hope, which has raised more than \$70,000.

It was started six years ago by Aurora's Gayle Palmer, whose sister beat ovarian cancer.

There will be live music, a nail painting station, silent auction and swag bags for participants.

Raising awareness is what the event is all about for Ms Thompson.

"I want women just to be aware of what's going on with their bodies," she said. "I really didn't know what ovarian cancer was. You had to do a lot of your own research.

Most women don't discover ovarian cancer early because there is no test to detect it.

The chance of surviving is much higher when you catch the disease in the early stages.

If caught when the cancer is confined to the ovaries, women have about a 90 per cent chance of survival.

The problem is only about a quarter of ovarian cancer cases are caught in this early stage.

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When the cancer spreads to other parts of the body, it's often too late. Only 20 to 25 per cent of women with ovarian cancer live for five years after it spreads outside the ovaries.

Looking back, Ms Thompson said she had all the classic symptoms: abdominal sweating, trouble with urination, lower back pain, being totally run down and menstrual issues.

Women should be aware of the danger, she said.

At first, Ms Thompson was somewhat reluctant to speak out about the issue, but she hopes her story will help other women.

"Be forceful with your doctor to find out what is wrong," she said. "Too often, ovarian cancer is discovered too late."

It's been nine years since her surgery and Ms Thompson's health has been good.

"I can do this for the women who can't fight. I am very lucky and most women are not," she said.

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