

Fibroids

Uterine fibroids are growths in the womb (uterus). They are made of muscle and other tissue. Fibroids almost never develop into cancer. Uterine fibroids are very common in women of childbearing age. No one knows what causes fibroids.

Fibroids affect more than 1 in every 5 women under age 50. They are the cause for 3 out of every 10 hysterectomies. Hysterectomy is surgery to take out the womb.

Who is at risk for fibroids?

- African American women have a greater risk than white women.
- Women who are overweight have greater risk than those who are not.

What are the symptoms?

Many women don't feel any symptoms. Without symptoms, you probably won't even know that you have fibroids. Fibroids can cause these symptoms:

- Heavy bleeding or painful periods
- Bleeding between periods
- Feeling "full" in the lower part of your belly
- Needing to use the bathroom often
- Pain during sex
- Lower back pain

- Not being able to have a baby (infertility), losing a baby (miscarriages), and early labor during pregnancy

Where do fibroids grow?

Fibroids can grow in different areas of the womb, such as:

- Inside the wall of the womb.
- From the wall of the womb outward, into the lower pelvic or belly area.
- From wall of the womb inward, close to the lining of the womb. This type causes heavy, long periods of bleeding.

Will my womb (uterus) be taken out?

If you need treatment, talk to your doctor to see what is best for you. Taking out the womb may not be the best choice for every woman. A woman would not want this form of treatment if she wants to have children.

What if I still want to have a child?

In some cases, fibroids can stop a woman from getting pregnant. Doctors have ways to treat fibroids and to help you get pregnant. These treatments can often improve your chances of having a successful pregnancy.



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What are the treatments?

The form of treatment depends on a few things:

- Does the woman have symptoms?
- Does she want to have a child?
- How large are the fibroids?
- How old is the woman?

Treatment choices include:

- Pain medicines.
- Shrinking the fibroids without surgery:
 - By decreasing the blood flow to them (uterine artery embolization).
 - By destroying the fibroids with heat (magnetic resonance-guided focused ultrasound).
- Surgery to take out the fibroids without taking out the womb (myomectomy).

- Surgery to take out the womb (hysterectomy). Hysterectomy might be a good choice if:
 - You don't want any more children AND you are in a lot of pain from your fibroids.
 - Your periods are so heavy that you have a very low blood count (anemia).

Talk to your doctor about the kinds of hysterectomy that are available.

Do fibroids cause cancer?

Fibroids almost never develop into a muscle type of cancer. Having fibroids does not increase your risk for getting other kinds of cancer in the womb.

Do they ever go away?

Fibroids usually stop growing or shrink after menopause ("the change of life").

FDA Office of Women's Health <http://www.fda.gov/womens>

To Learn More:

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