

Fibroids

F I B R O I D S

Uterine fibroids are growths in the womb (uterus). They are made of muscle and other tissue. They are not cancer. Uterine fibroids are very common in women of childbearing age.

Fibroids affect more than 1 out of 5 women under age 50. They cause 3 out of every 10 hysterectomies (his-ter-EK-tum-meez). (The womb is removed in a hysterectomy.)

No one knows what causes fibroids. Some doctors think they are caused by the female sex hormone estrogen.

Who is at risk for fibroids?

- African-American women have a greater risk than white women.
- Women who are overweight have a 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. But fibroids can cause some of these symptoms:

- Heavy bleeding or painful periods
- Bleeding between periods
- Feeling "full" in the lower part of your stomach (pelvic pressure)
- Using 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 are named for where they grow in the womb:

- Intramural — the most common type, grow inside the uterine wall.
- Subserous or subserosal — grow outward from the uterine wall into the stomach area.
- Submucous — grow inward from the uterine wall taking up space within the uterus itself. This type causes heavy long periods of bleeding.

Will my womb (uterus) have to be removed?

- This is not the best choice for every woman. A woman would not want this form of treatment if she wants to have children.

Fibroids (cont.)

What if I still want to have a child?

- In some cases, fibroids can prevent a woman from getting pregnant naturally. Doctors have ways to treat fibroids and infertility. These treatments can improve your chances of getting pregnant.

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?
- What is the woman's age?

A woman may not need any treatment if she shows no symptoms.

Treatment choices include:

- Pain medicines
- Surgery to remove the fibroids or the womb. Having your womb removed might be a good choice if:
 - you have all the children you want AND
 - you are in a lot of pain from a large fibroid.

Do fibroids cause cancer? No

- Fibroids are not linked with cancer. They rarely develop into cancer. Having fibroids does *not* increase your risk for uterine cancer.

Do they ever go away?

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

To Learn More...

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