

FIBROIDS

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What are fibroids?

Fibroids are non-cancerous growths that develop in or around the womb (uterus). The growths are made up of muscle and fibrous tissue and vary in size.

The exact cause of fibroids is unknown, but they have been linked to the hormone oestrogen.

Fibroids usually develop during the reproductive years (from around the age of 16 to 50) when oestrogen levels are at their highest.

They tend to shrink when oestrogen levels are low, such as after the menopause.

Fibroids can grow anywhere in the womb and vary in size considerably. Some can be the size of a pea, whereas others can be the size of a melon.

2 in 3

women will develop fibroids in their lifetime

Symptoms

Many are unaware they have fibroids because they do not have any symptoms. Some symptoms that are experienced are:

- heavy periods or painful periods
- stomach (abdominal) pain
- lower back pain
- a frequent need to urinate
- constipation
- pain or discomfort during sex

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Diagnosis

As fibroids do not often cause symptoms, they're sometimes diagnosed by chance during a routine examination or scan, but if you do have symptoms of fibroids, it is always recommended that you go to see your GP.

If a GP suspects fibroids, they'll usually carry out a pelvic examination to look for any obvious signs. They may also refer you for further tests to confirm a diagnosis or rule out other possible causes of your symptoms. Further tests could include things like an ultrasound scan, hysteroscopy, laparoscopy or biopsy.

Treatment

Fibroids do not need to be treated if they are not causing symptoms and after the menopause, they'll often shrink without treatment. If you do have symptoms caused by fibroids, medicine to help relieve the symptoms will usually be recommended first – this include such things as an IUS (also known as a coil), tranexamic acid, anti-inflammatory medicines, the contraceptive pill, oral progesterone and other medications that may shrink fibroids.

Several different surgical procedures can be used to treat fibroids. A GP can refer you to a specialist, who'll discuss the options with you, including benefits and any associated risks. These options can include: myomectomy, hysteroscopic resection of fibroids, hysteroscopic morcellation of fibroids. There also some non-surgical options such as: uterine artery embolisation (UAE) and endometrial ablation.

For further information: [NICE Guidelines on Fibroids](#)

