

FAQs About Uterine Fibroids

What are Uterine Fibroids?

Uterine fibroids are non-cancerous growths that develop in the muscle tissue of the uterus. They can be inside the uterus, on its outer surface, or within the uterine wall. It is estimated that nearly two-thirds of all women have fibroids, but for many women, they do not cause issues or pain.

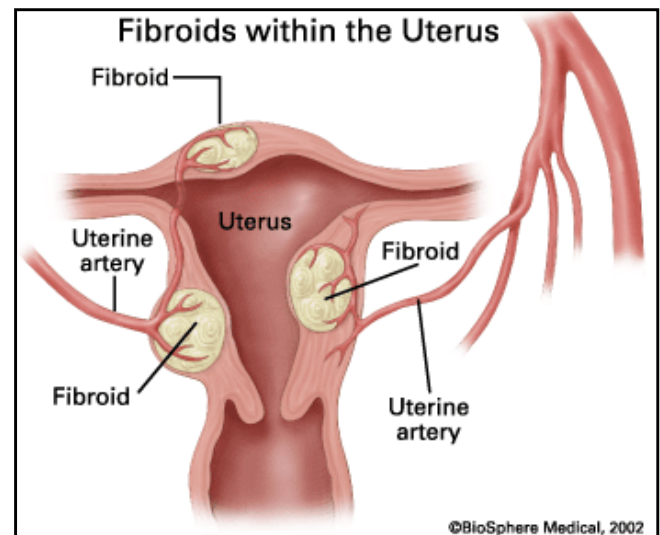
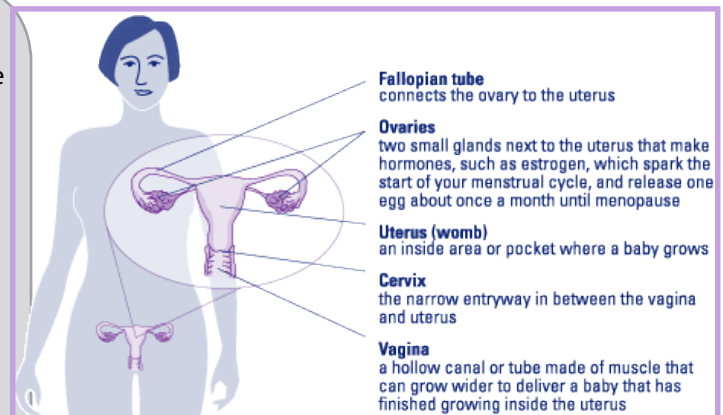
About 20 percent to 80 percent of women develop fibroids by the time they reach age 50. Fibroids are most common in women in their 40s and early 50s.

Symptoms:

- Heavy bleeding (which can be heavy enough to cause anemia) or painful periods
- Feeling of fullness in the pelvic area (lower stomach area)
- Enlargement of the lower abdomen
- Frequent urination
- Pain during sex
- Lower back pain
- Complications during pregnancy and labor, including a six-time greater risk of cesarean section
- Reproductive problems, such as infertility, which is very rare

Treatment:

- Medications, including low-dose birth control can be used to manage symptoms
- Surgery may be required. There are several surgical options including: Myomectomy, which removes fibroids but leaves healthy uterine tissue, Hysterectomy to remove the uterus, Endometrial Ablation to remove the lining of the uterus, Myolysis which uses heat or freezing to remove the fibroid, or Uterine Fibroid Embolization (UFE), or Uterine Artery Embolization (UAE), which injects gel particles to block the blood supply to the fibroids.



FDA warning on power morcellators in treatment for uterine fibroids

If your doctor recommends a hysterectomy or myomectomy to treat your uterine fibroids, ask your doctor if a power morcellator will be used. Power morcellators break uterine fibroids into small pieces to remove them more easily. Recently, the FDA warned against the use of power morcellators for most women. This is because uterine tissue may contain undiagnosed cancer. While breaking up the uterine tissue, power morcellators can spread an undiagnosed cancer to other parts of the body without your doctor knowing it. Most uterine fibroids are not cancerous, but there is no way to know for sure until the fibroids are removed and tested.



Sources:
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; Office of Women's Health