

## FIBROID TUMORS

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### ***What are fibroid tumors?***

Fibroid tumors are benign growths in the muscle or connective tissue of the uterus.

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### ***Who gets fibroid tumors?***

The number of women with fibroids is difficult to project, since fibroids are usually silent. Some estimates suggest that while they are found in up to 20% of fertile women, they may be present in up to 80%.

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### ***What are the signs and symptoms?***

Usually fibroids produce no symptoms at all. In extreme cases the fibroid may grow large enough to press on the sensory nerves inside the uterus. If they are on nearby structures like the bladder, they can cause urinary frequency; if on the rectum, they can cause difficulties with defecation. If they press on the fallopian (uterine) tubes, they may interfere with pregnancy. They can also cause heavy menstrual bleeding and occasionally bleeding between menstrual periods.

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### ***How do you know if you've got fibroid tumors?***

Some cause heavy menstrual bleeding or put mechanical pressure on other structures in the pelvis.

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### ***How are fibroid tumors treated?***

Fibroids seldom require treatment unless they cause pain and excessive bleeding or they interfere with pregnancy. Hormone therapy can shrink them, but they grow back when medication is stopped. Other options include minimally invasive procedures to shrink the growths or blocking off the supplying. Surgical possibilities include laser ablation, myomectomy (the removal of the tumor while preserving the rest of the uterus), or full hysterectomy.

Large diagnosed fibroid tumors contraindicate deep abdominal massage. However, most fibroids are quite small and virtually silent, and massage has no effect on them at all.

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### ***Are there any complications if it's not treated?***

Fibroids are very seldom serious, but they can lead to some troubling consequences. The heavy periods they cause sometimes lead to anemia from excessive blood loss. They can cause infertility by obstructing fallopian tubes or interfering with the implantation of a fertilized ovum. They can also interfere in pregnancies brought to term: if a fibroid is large enough, it can crowd the growing fetus or block the exit through the cervix. These problems can lead to premature births and cesarean sections.

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### ***How can I avoid getting fibroid tumors?***

The pathophysiology of uterine fibroids is not well understood. While they sometimes run in families, they are not strictly genetically linked. Many experts believe that they arise as a combination of genetic, environmental, and hormonal factors.

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This fact sheet is designed to provide you with information on fibroid tumors. It is not intended to replace the need for a consultation with your doctor. All clients are strongly advised to check with their doctor about any specific questions or concerns they may have. Every effort has been taken to ensure that the information in this pamphlet is correct at the time of printing.

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