

## Women's Health

### What is uterine fibroid?

Fibroid is a non-cancerous growth arising from the muscle wall of the womb. It is one of the most common gynecological conditions and is estimated to be present in about 20 - 30 per cent of the women.

Most fibroids grow within the wall of the uterus. Based on where they grow:

Submucosal (pronounced sub-myoo-co-sul) fibroids grow inside the cavity of the womb.  
Intramural (pronounced in-tra-myur-ul) fibroids grow within the wall of the womb.  
Subserosal (pronounced sub-sir-oh-sul) fibroids grow on the outside of the uterus.

### What are the symptoms of fibroids?

Depending on the size and location of the fibroids, there may or may not be any symptoms. But fibroids can cause the following symptoms:

- Heavy bleeding or painful periods
- Bleeding in between periods
- Feeling "full" in the lower abdomen - sometimes called "pelvic pressure"
- Urinating often (results from a fibroid pressing on the bladder)
- Lower back pain
- Difficulty to conceive and repeated miscarriages

### What are the treatments for uterine fibroids?

The treatment depends on the women's age, desire for further childbearing, the size of the fibroids, her symptoms and their severity.

If a woman has uterine fibroids, but has no symptoms she may not need any treatment. However a regular check up is required to see if the fibroids have grown. Fibroids are hormone dependant and hence usually decrease in size after menopause.

If the fibroid gives rise to mild symptoms of pain your doctor may suggest pain-relievers.

Certain hormonal medications can reduce the bleeding during menses. Other drugs like GnRh-analogues can be used temporarily for symptom relief or to reduce the size of the fibroid before surgery. Mirena coil can be used in some cases to reduce the bleeding during menses.

Those fibroids that are giving rise to severe symptoms, are big, or growing in size need to be treated surgically.

Surgery involves either removing the fibroids (myomectomy) or the entire womb (hysterectomy). Both of the procedures can be performed by the laparoscopic approach as well as by the conventional open surgery depending on the size of the fibroid, its location, the doctors' experience and training.

Certain other treatments are now being tried.

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These involve cutting off the blood supply of the fibroids uterine artery embolization which can be performed under X-ray guidance.