

Fibroids. What you need to know and what you need to do. Common questions and answers.

What is a fibroid?

A fibroid is a benign (non-cancerous) but abnormal growth of muscle in the wall of the uterus. Small fibroids sometimes shrink on their own, but most of the time they continue to grow.

How common are they?

Almost 80% of uteri that are examined after a hysterectomy have at least 1 fibroid, although only 12-25% of women will develop symptoms from these fibroids in their lifetime. So while the vast majority of women have fibroids, only some of them will go on to develop symptoms.

What sort of symptoms can women with fibroids have?

Fibroids most commonly cause heavy periods or irregular bleeding. They are also a very common cause of painful periods. When fibroids reach a certain size, they can cause symptoms of compression in the pelvis like bloating, abdominal fullness, pelvic pressure and urinary frequency. Some fibroids can also cause problems with infertility.

What non-surgical treatments are available?

Often times birth control, other hormones or other medications can help decrease the amount of bleeding women have as a result of fibroids. If the fibroids are small, an IUD or an endometrial ablation may help.

A procedure called a Uterine Artery Embolization stops the blood supply to the uterus by injecting a clotting agent through a catheter placed in the groin. It is done as an outpatient procedure and immediate results are great. However, ~20% of women will need another treatment (surgery or a repeat embolization) within five years.

What kind of symptoms can't be treated with medication?

The "bulk" symptoms described above are usually not responsive to medication. While there is medication that can shrink fibroids in the short term, there does not exist a long term medication that can do this.

What if I still want to have a baby?

If fibroids are a problem but you still want to be able to have a baby, surgery may be your best option. We can perform a minimally invasive myomectomy (removal of a fibroid) while leaving the uterus behind to help women keep their fertility. This is best achieved with da Vinci Surgical System to maximize your results with minimizing your pain. See below under ***hysterectomy*** for more information.

If I do need a hysterectomy, am I going to need a big incision?

Not necessarily. The da Vinci Surgical System is a minimally invasive surgical technique that allows us to do surgery through small incisions in your abdomen instead of one big incision. There are many advantages to the da Vinci Surgical System, the biggest advantage being getting patients healed faster and with fewer complications.

If you are suffering from any of the symptoms listed above, please talk to your doctor about being evaluated for fibroids.

Please visit Greenville Women's Clinic's website for more information [**www.greenvillewc.com**](http://www.greenvillewc.com)