

FAST FACTS: FIBROIDS

WHAT THEY ARE

Benign (noncancerous) growths within the wall of the uterus. They are also called uterine leiomyomas.

WHAT THEY LOOK LIKE

Fibroids can grow as a single growth or in groups. Their size can vary from small, like an apple seed, to even larger than a grapefruit.

CAUSE

No one knows exactly what causes fibroids. Fibroids often run in families.

SYMPTOMS

Most fibroids do not cause any symptoms. If symptoms are present they may be:

- heavy bleeding or painful periods
- spotting or bleeding between periods
- feeling of fullness in the pelvic area (lower abdomen)
- frequent urination
- pain during sex
- lower back pain
- reproductive problems such as not being able to get pregnant, having more than one miscarriage, or having early onset of labor during pregnancy

TESTS

- Regular pelvic exam
- Ultrasound — a test that creates a “picture” of the inside of your body to see if you have fibroids
- Laparoscopy — surgery in which your doctor inserts a small tube with a light and a camera inside your abdomen to look for any fibroids
- Hysteroscopy — surgery in which your doctor inserts a long tube with a camera into the vagina and directly into the uterus to look for any fibroids

TREATMENT

- Pain medication
- Drugs that may decrease the size of the fibroids or that stop or slow the growth of fibroids
- Surgery
- Shrinking the fibroids by placing a freezing agent on them
- Cutting off the blood supply to the uterus and the fibroids so they shrink (uterine artery embolization)

ARE FIBROIDS CANCER OR COULD THEY BECOME CANCEROUS?

Although fibroids are sometimes called tumors, they are benign and do not cause cancer.

If you are experiencing symptoms of fibroids, please talk to your primary care provider about treatment options.

