



# Uterine Fibroids: What You Need to Know

Uterine fibroids, (medically called leiomyoma or myoma), are non-cancerous tumors that start form inside or around the uterus. They are comprised of connective tissue and smooth muscle cells, and while they are not life-threatening, they can contribute to wide range of clinical symptoms significantly affecting the quality of life. Here are some key information to know about uterine fibroids, including their causes, symptoms, types, diagnosis, treatment and precautionary measures:



## Types of fibroids?

Uterine fibroids vary greatly in size, number, and location. Some fibroids remain undetected because they cause no symptoms, while others grow large enough to distort the uterus. Fibroids may be as little as a pea or can grow as huge as a watermelon, significantly impacting health and well-being if left untreated. The diversity of their presentations makes it important to tailor management strategies to each individual's specific condition. Fibroids are categorized according to their anatomical position inside the uterus:

### ① Intramural Fibroids:

Appear inside the muscular layer of the uterus. These are among the most prevalent form and may induce severe heavy periods and pelvic discomfort.

## ② Subserosal Fibroids:

Appear right under the outer surface of the uterus. They may press against surrounding organs, leading to symptoms like frequent urination or constipation.

## ③ Submucosal Fibroids:

Appear under the inner surface of the uterus occasionally extending into the cavity. Even small submucosal fibroids can be responsible for excessive menstrual bleeding and fertility issues.

## ④ Pedunculated Fibroids:

Connected to the uterine wall via a pedicle structure. These can grow either inside or outside the uterus and may twist, causing severe pain.



## Causes And Risk Factors Of Uterine Fibroids:

No clear cause has been identified for uterine fibroids development is not fully understood, but multiple factors are believed to contribute to their growth:

### ① Hormonal Influence:

Progesterone and Estrogen, the two key hormones that regulate the menstrual cycle, are thought to initiate the fibroids growth. Fibroids tend to shrink after menopause when hormone levels decrease. A hormonal imbalance, in which the levels of estrogen are far greater than the levels of progesterone, is commonly known as "estrogen dominance" and has been suggested as the primary form of imbalance causing the development and growth of uterine fibroids. In effect, too much estrogen without enough progesterone to balance its effects allows for uncontrolled fibroid growth.

### ② Genetic Factors:

A hereditary predisposition to fibroids increases the likelihood of developing them. Certain genetic changes have also been identified in fibroid cells.

### ③ Age:

Fibroids often occurs during the reproductive years, particularly between the ages of 30 and 40.

#### ④ Ethnicity:

Women of black ethnicity are more prone to develop fibroids. They are also more likely to have larger and more symptomatic fibroids.

#### ⑤ Lifestyle Factors:

Obesity, a diet high in meat and low in vegetables and fruits and reduced physical activity have been associated with an increased risk of fibroids.

#### ⑥ Other Factors:

Early start of menstruation, usage of hormonal contraceptive methods, and a deficiency in vitamin D may also play a role in the development of fibroids.

Understanding these risk factors can help in early detection and management of uterine fibroids. Furthermore, identifying modifiable risk factors such as diet and lifestyle choices can empower individuals to take preventive measures.

## Symptoms Of Uterine Fibroids?

While some people with fibroids remain asymptomatic, others experience significant symptoms that can affect their daily lives. The intensity of symptoms can vary with the location, number and size of fibroids. For some individuals, these symptoms can significantly impair quality of life, making timely diagnosis and management essential. Common symptoms include:



#### ① Menstrual Irregularities:

Heavy or prolonged menstrual bleeding, often accompanied by the passage of clots, and intermenstrual spotting.

#### ② Pelvic Pressure and Pain:

A feeling of fullness or discomfort in the lower abdomen. Larger fibroids can cause severe pain or pressure on surrounding organs.

#### ③ Frequent Urination:

Fibroids pushing on the bladder might lead to a higher frequency and urgency of urinating.

#### ④ **Constipation:**

Large fibroids pressing on the rectum leads to difficulty in bowel movements.

#### ⑤ **Back and Leg Pain:**

Larger fibroids may press on nerves, causing referred discomfort in the legs or lower back.

#### ⑥ **Reproductive and fertility Issues:**

Difficulty conceiving, recurrent miscarriages, or complications during pregnancy, such as preterm delivery or breech position.



## How Are Uterine Fibroids Diagnosed?

Diagnosis of uterine fibroids often entails a mix of physical examination, imaging studies and medical history. Healthcare providers may use the following methods:

#### ① **Pelvic Examination:**

To detect a large or irregular shaped uterus.

#### ② **Ultrasound:**

A non-invasive imaging test that uses sound waves to create images of the uterus and detect fibroids.

#### ③ **MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging):**

Displayed detailed images to determine the size, number, and location of fibroids. MRI is often used for surgical planning.

#### ④ **Hysterosonography (Saline Infusion Sonography):**

Involves injecting fluid into the uterine cavity to improve visualization of submucosal fibroids.

#### ⑤ **Hysteroscopy:**

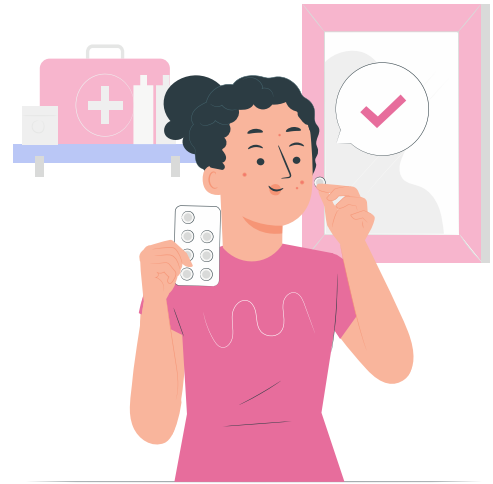
A tiny, illuminated scope is placed into the uterus to observe the uterine interior.

#### ⑥ **Blood Tests:**

To check for anemia resulting from heavy menstrual bleeding and to rule out other conditions.

# How Can Uterine Fibroids Be Treated?

Luckily, there are now several treatment options for uterine fibroids. Choosing the right treatment depends on the intensity of symptoms, location and fibroid size, the patient's age, and their future conceiving plans. Treatment options include:



## ① Watchful Waiting:

For asymptomatic fibroids or those causing minimal symptoms, a "watchful waiting" approach may be suggested. Regular checkups help ensure that any changes are promptly addressed. This approach is particularly suitable for individuals nearing menopause, as fibroids often shrink after hormonal levels decrease (Wise & Laughlin-Tommaso, 2016).

## ② Medications:

Medications aim to manage symptoms rather than eliminate fibroids. Common options include:

- **Hormonal Therapy:** Contraceptive pills or intrauterine devices (IUDs) can regulate menstrual flow and alleviate pain like Mirena.
- **GnRH Agonists:** These drugs reduce estrogen and progesterone levels, shrinking fibroids but may cause menopausal-like side effects like Prostag.
- **GnRH oral antagonist:** Like Reyqo which helps to stop fibroid growth and give a bit of hormone back to avoid menopausal symptoms.
- **Tranexamic Acid:** Hormone free medication that reduces excessive bleeding.
- **Nonsteroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs):** Help relieve discomfort and decrease inflammation associated with fibroids.

## ③ Minimally Invasive Procedures:

- **Uterine Artery Embolization (UAE):** It is a radiological method that inhibits blood supply to fibroids, forcing them to shrink.
- **Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA):** Uses heat to destroy fibroid tissue while preserving the uterus.
- **High frequency ultrasound sonication:** Uses high frequency ultrasonic waves to liquefy the fibroid form inside.

#### ④ Surgical Options

- **Laparoscopic or Hysteroscopic Myomectomy:** Surgical excision of fibroids while keeping the uterus, suitable for individuals who desire to maintain fertility.
- **Hysterectomy:** The entire excision of the uterus. It is a final therapy for fibroids and removes the potential of regrowth but is not ideal for individuals who desire to conceive.

#### ⑤ Alternative Therapies

Complementary treatments, such as acupuncture, dietary changes, or herbal remedies, may provide symptom relief. However, scientific evidence supporting their efficacy is limited, and they should be used in consultation with doctor.

## Living with Uterine Fibroids:

Fibroid management includes a mix of medical treatment and lifestyle adjustments:

- **Regular Check-Ups:** Monitor fibroid growth and symptoms through routine healthcare visits.
- **Healthy Diet:** Take diet full of fruits, vegetables, cereals and lean proteins. Foods high in iron, such as spinach and lentils, can help combat anemia and Green Tea Extracts supplements.
- **Physical Activity:** Regular physical activity assists in maintaining an adequate weight and decreases stress.
- **Stress Management:** Practices like yoga, meditation, and mindfulness can improve overall well-being.

Adopting these habits can improve life quality and enhance the effectiveness of medical treatments. It also empowers individuals to take an active role in managing their condition.





## Can Diet Or Exercise Help Prevent Uterine Fibroids?

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- **Maintain a Healthy Weight:** Obesity increases the risk of fibroids..
- **Balanced Diet:** Reduce red meat consumption and add lots of fruits, veggies, and reduced-fat dairy products.
- **Vitamin D:** Adequate levels may help lower the risk of fibroids. A serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D level of at least 20 ng/mL is considered adequate to potentially lower the risk of uterine fibroids (Harmon et al., 2022).
- **Regular Exercise:** Promotes hormonal balance and overall health.
- **Avoid Alcohol and Smoking:** These habits may exacerbate fibroid development. Prevention strategies emphasize overall health and well-being, offering benefits beyond fibroid management.

## Advancements in Fibroid Research:

Ongoing research is improving our understanding of fibroids and their treatment. Studies focus on non-surgical treatments, genetic markers, and less invasive diagnostic tools. Researchers are exploring personalized medicine approaches to address fibroid-related challenges. Promising areas include the development of targeted therapies that minimize side effects and enhance efficacy. In summary, uterine fibroids are a common health condition affecting thousands of women and can lead to significant negative impact on their quality of life. Timely diagnosis and management therapies may reduce problems and improve results. By staying informed and proactive about your health, you can effectively manage uterine fibroids and maintain a high quality of life.

At LUNA, we strive to provide up to date and individualized advice to help you devise an individualised treatment plan that fits your health priorities and continue to support you as you evolve to meet your needs as they change over time.

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