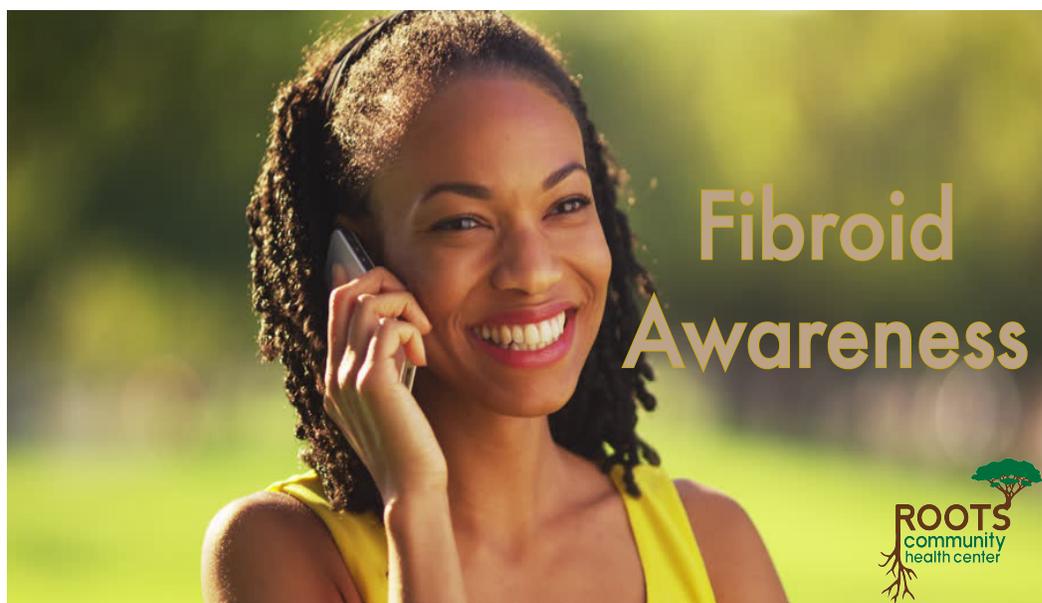


FIBROIDS



What Are Fibroids?

Fibroids are abnormal growths that develop in or on a woman's uterus.

It is unclear why fibroids develop, but several factors may influence their formation, such as hormones and family history.

About 70 to 80 percent of women experience fibroids by the age of 50.

Facts

- Most American women will develop fibroids at some point in their lives. One study found that, by age 50, 70 percent of whites and 80 percent of African Americans had fibroids. In many cases, fibroids are believed not to cause symptoms, and in such cases women may be unaware they have them.
- Several studies have also investigated the effects of diet on the growth of fibroids. Recent findings from a study of more than 22,000 African American women showed that women who consumed milk, cheese, ice cream, or other dairy products at least once a day were less likely to develop fibroids than were women who consumed dairy less frequently.
- Medical therapy is used for many women who have symptoms from fibroids and sometimes is used prior to surgery to shrink the fibroids. Commercially available drugs that shrink fibroids include gonadotropin-releasing hormones, which usually cause symptoms of menopause. Drugs that block the hormone progesterone can slow or stop the growth of fibroids. Some health care providers may use hormonal or over-the
- Recent findings suggest fibroid tissue is made up of tangles of collagen and that hormone therapies may be ineffective at breaking them down. Studies using drugs to treat fibroids by breaking apart collagen or preventing it from forming are in the planning stages.

Who Is At Risk?

Women are at greater risk for developing fibroids if they have one or more of the following risk factors:

- pregnancy
- a family history of fibroids
- being over the age of 30
- being of African-American descent
- having a high body

Roots Community Health Center- Healing Our Community From Within

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Symptoms

- Heavy or prolonged menstrual periods
- Abnormal bleeding between menstrual periods
- Pelvic pain (caused as the tumor presses on pelvic organs)
- Frequent urination
- Low back pain
- Pain during intercourse
- A firm mass, often located near the middle of the pelvis, which can be felt by the physician



How Are Fibroids Diagnosed?

Ultrasound

An **ultrasound** uses high frequency sound waves to produce images of your uterus on a screen. This will allow your doctor to see its internal structures and any fibroids present. A **transvaginal ultrasound**, in which the ultrasound wand (transducer) is inserted into the vagina, may provide clearer pictures since it is closer to the uterus during this procedure.

Pelvic MRI

This **in-depth imaging testing** produces pictures of your uterus, ovaries, and other pelvic organs.

How Are Fibroids Treated?

Medications

Medications to regulate your hormone levels may be prescribed to shrink fibroids. Other options that can help control bleeding and pain, but will not shrink or eliminate fibroids, include:

- an intrauterine device (IUD) that releases the hormone progestin
- over-the-counter anti-inflammatory pain relievers, such as ibuprofen
- birth control pills

Surgery

Surgery to remove very large or multiple growths (myomectomy) may be performed. Your physician may perform a hysterectomy (removal of your uterus) if your condition worsens, or if no other treatments work. Minimally Invasive Procedures may also be an alternative.

Schedule an appointment with Roots Clinic providers to get a pelvic exam.

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