

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF UTERINE FIBROIDS

Yuldosheva Luiza

Ibadat Nuriddinovna Kamarova

Scientific Supervisor

### Abstract

Uterine fibroids are noncancerous growths that develop in the uterus. While many women experience no symptoms, others may have a range of signs and symptoms, which can significantly impact their quality of life. This article provides a comprehensive overview of the common signs and symptoms associated with uterine fibroids, highlighting the importance of early diagnosis and treatment to alleviate symptoms and improve overall well-being.

**Keywords:** Uterine fibroids, symptoms, signs, diagnosis, treatment, heavy bleeding, pain, pelvic pressure, infertility, urinary problems, bowel problems.

### Introduction

Uterine fibroids are the most common benign tumors found in women of reproductive age. These growths develop in the uterine wall and can vary in size, number, and location. While many women with uterine fibroids experience no symptoms, others may face a variety of challenges that can significantly impact their daily lives.

Understanding the common signs and symptoms associated with uterine fibroids is crucial for early diagnosis and appropriate management. Early intervention can help alleviate symptoms, prevent complications, and improve a woman's overall well-being. This article explores the wide range of signs and symptoms that may be experienced by women with uterine fibroids, providing valuable information for both patients and healthcare professionals.

Uterine fibroids are common growths of the uterus. They often appear during the years you're usually able to get pregnant and give birth. Uterine fibroids are not cancer, and they almost never turn into cancer. They aren't linked with a higher risk of other types of cancer in the uterus either. They're also called leiomyomas (lie-o-my-O-muhs) or myomas.

Fibroids vary in number and size. You can have a single fibroid or more than one. Some of these growths are too small to see with the eyes. Others can grow to the size of a grapefruit or larger. A fibroid that gets very big can distort the inside and the outside of the uterus. In extreme cases, some fibroids grow large enough to fill the pelvis or stomach area. They can make a person look pregnant.

Many people have uterine fibroids sometime during their lives. But you might not know you have them, because they often cause no symptoms. Your health care professional may just happen to find fibroids during a pelvic exam or pregnancy ultrasound.

### **Materials and Methods**

This article is a comprehensive review of existing medical literature on the signs and symptoms of uterine fibroids. We conducted a thorough search of PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar databases using relevant keywords such as "uterine fibroids," "symptoms," "signs," "diagnosis," "treatment," and "complications."

We included studies published in English from 2000 to 2023, focusing on clinical studies, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses that examined the prevalence, clinical presentation, and management of uterine fibroids. We excluded case reports and opinion pieces.

Many people who have uterine fibroids don't have any symptoms. In those who do, symptoms can be influenced by the location, size and number of fibroids.

The most common symptoms of uterine fibroids include:

Heavy menstrual bleeding or painful periods.

Longer or more frequent periods.

Pelvic pressure or pain.

Frequent urination or trouble urinating.

Growing stomach area.

Constipation.

Pain in the stomach area or lower back, or pain during sex.

Rarely, a fibroid can cause sudden, serious pain when it outgrows its blood supply and starts to die.

Often, fibroids are grouped by their location. Intramural fibroids grow within the muscular wall of the uterus. Submucosal fibroids bulge into the uterine cavity. Subserosal fibroids form on the outside of the uterus.

When to see a doctor

See your doctor if you have:

Pelvic pain that doesn't go away.

Heavy or painful periods that limit what you can do.

Spotting or bleeding between periods.

Trouble emptying your bladder.

Ongoing tiredness and weakness, which can be symptoms of anemia, meaning a low level of red blood cells.

Get medical care right away if you have severe bleeding from the vagina or sharp pelvic pain that comes on fast.

### **Results**

Our review of the literature revealed a diverse range of signs and symptoms associated with uterine fibroids, which can be categorized into the following:

1. **Heavy Menstrual Bleeding:** The most common symptom of uterine fibroids is heavy or prolonged menstrual bleeding (menorrhagia). This can lead to anemia and fatigue.

2. **Pelvic Pain:** Fibroids can cause pain in the lower abdomen, pelvis, or back, especially during menstruation or intercourse.

3. **Pelvic Pressure:** Fibroids can put pressure on the bladder or rectum, leading to feelings of fullness, bloating, and difficulty urinating or defecating.

4. **Infertility:** In some cases, uterine fibroids can interfere with implantation or disrupt the menstrual cycle, making it difficult to conceive.

5. **Urinary and Bowel Problems:** Fibroids can compress the bladder or rectum, leading to urinary frequency, urgency, or incontinence, as well as constipation.

6. **Other Symptoms:** Additional symptoms may include:

- \* Pain during intercourse

- \* Abnormal vaginal bleeding

- \* Lower back pain

\* Fatigue

\* A feeling of pressure in the pelvic area

### **Discussion**

The prevalence and clinical presentation of uterine fibroids can vary widely depending on factors such as age, race, and family history. While many women with fibroids experience no symptoms, it is important to be aware of the potential signs and symptoms, as early diagnosis and treatment can significantly improve outcomes.

Diagnosis typically involves a combination of pelvic exams, ultrasound imaging, and other tests to determine the size, location, and number of fibroids. Treatment options range from watchful waiting to surgical intervention, depending on the size and location of the fibroids, as well as the severity of symptoms.

The exact cause of uterine fibroids isn't clear. But these factors may play roles:  
Gene changes. Many fibroids contain changes in genes that differ from those in typical uterine muscle cells.

Hormones. Two hormones called estrogen and progesterone cause the tissue the lines the inside of the uterus to thicken during each menstrual cycle to prepare for pregnancy. These hormones also seem to help fibroids grow.

Fibroids contain more cells that estrogen and progesterone bind to than do typical uterine muscle cells. Fibroids tend to shrink after menopause due to a drop in hormone levels.

Other growth factors. Substances that help the body maintain tissues, such as insulin-like growth factor, may affect fibroid growth.

Extracellular matrix (ECM). This material makes cells stick together, like mortar between bricks. ECM is increased in fibroids and makes them fibrous. ECM also stores growth factors and causes biologic changes in the cells themselves.

Doctors believe that uterine fibroids may develop from a stem cell in the smooth muscular tissue of the uterus. A single cell divides over and over. In time it turns into a firm, rubbery mass distinct from nearby tissue.

The growth patterns of uterine fibroids vary. They may grow slowly or fast. Or they might stay the same size. Some fibroids go through growth spurts, and some shrink on their own.

Fibroids that form during pregnancy can shrink or go away after pregnancy, as the uterus goes back to its usual size.

#### Risk factors

There are few known risk factors for uterine fibroids, other than being a person of reproductive age. These include:

**Race.** All people of reproductive age who were born female could develop fibroids. But Black people are more likely to have fibroids than are people of other racial groups. Black people have fibroids at younger ages than do white people. They're also likely to have more or larger fibroids, along with worse symptoms, than do white people.

**Family history.** If your mother or sister had fibroids, you're at higher risk of getting them.

**Other factors.** Starting your period before the age of 10; obesity; being low on vitamin D; having a diet higher in red meat and lower in green vegetables, fruit and dairy; and drinking alcohol, including beer, seem to raise your risk of getting fibroids.

#### **Conclusion**

Uterine fibroids are a common condition that can impact a woman's quality of life. Recognizing the wide range of potential symptoms is critical for early detection and management. By seeking medical attention when necessary, women can receive prompt diagnosis and appropriate treatment options to alleviate symptoms and minimize potential complications.

It is essential to remember that every woman's experience with uterine fibroids is unique. If you experience any of the symptoms discussed in this article, it is crucial to consult with your healthcare provider for a proper diagnosis and personalized treatment plan.

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