



**BLACK WOMEN
FOR WELLNESS**

UTERINE FIBROIDS:

A Guide for Black Women's Reproductive Health

EDUCATE. CONNECT. EMPOWER. ADVOCATE.



UTERINE FIBROIDS

WHAT ARE THEY?

Fibroids are very common, non-cancerous tumors in the uterus. They typically do not cause cancer and they develop when the uterine muscle cells overgrow. Fibroids can happen to anyone with a uterus. They develop during a person's reproductive years until menopause when they sometimes shrink. Most often, they affect people between 30-50 years old. Their size can be as small as a pea to as big as a grapefruit and sometimes even larger, making the person look pregnant.

Some people develop more than one fibroid of different sizes and locations. As of now, we do not fully understand what exactly causes fibroids. Researchers suggest that they are likely due to combination of biology and genetics, environmental exposures, gene-environment interaction and other factors like inflammation, stress, and the lifetime burden of racism.



COMMON SYMPTOMS



**HEAVY
IRREGULAR
BLEEDING & CLOTS**



**PELVIC &
BACK PAIN**



**FREQUENT
URINATION**



**ABDOMINAL
BLOATING**



**FERTILITY
CHALLENGES**



FATIGUE



ANEMIA

Some people never feel any symptoms or know that they have fibroids. Others experience severe pain or bleeding that interfere with life. Typically, fibroids do not cause fertility problems. But depending on the size and location of fibroids, some women may have infertility or complications with pregnancy. About 5-10% of women with infertility have fibroids.

TYPES OF UTERINE FIBROIDS

**Within the uterine
wall muscles**

INTRAMURAL

Inside the uterine lining

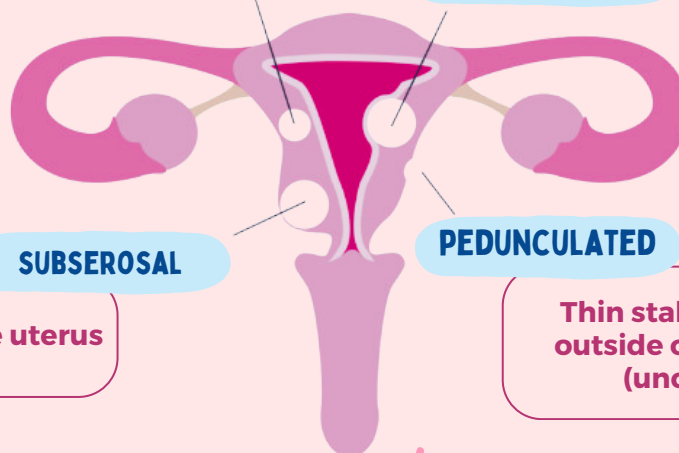
SUBMUCOSAL

SUBSerosal

Outer wall of the uterus

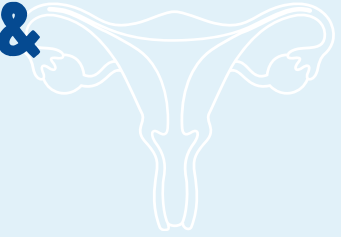
PEDUNCULATED

**Thin stalk growths on
outside of uterine wall
(uncommon)**





UTERINE FIBROIDS & BLACK WOMEN

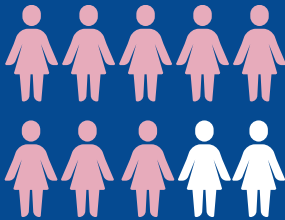


Black women with uterine fibroids are much more likely to have multiple fibroids at a younger age & more severe symptoms that interfere with everyday life, such as heavy bleeding, severe pain, and anemia.

PREVALENCE

8 OUT OF 10

Black women will be diagnosed by age 50



BLACK WOMEN HAVE A

10 year

earlier onset compared to white women

BLACK WOMEN ARE...

3X

more likely to develop fibroids

2X

more likely to have a radical surgery like hysterectomy

4X

more likely to be hospitalized

RISK FACTORS



WHY ARE BLACK WOMEN AT HIGHER RISK FOR FIBROIDS?

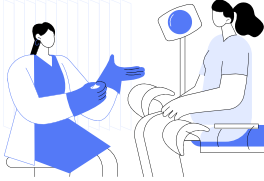
It is important to be aware that Black women experience more severe and a wider range of fibroid symptoms and that they tend to run in the family. Doctors don't understand the genetics that might make fibroids more common in Black people. More exposure to pollution and other chemicals in some of our communities as well as the increased stress of racism may be some of the reason. People with fibroids should not have to suffer in silence, since treatment is available. It is also important to teach our daughters about fibroids once they start their periods to help them learn to be aware of their bodies and possible symptoms.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

FOR UTERINE FIBROIDS

How are fibroids diagnosed?



Your doctor will order a **pelvic ultrasound (transvaginal or abdominal)** to visualize the location and size of fibroids. They may also order a blood draw to check for anemia, a **pelvic MRI**, or a **hysteroscopy** to look at the fibroids using a small camera through the vagina.

What are my treatment options?

There is no one-size-fits-all option. Treatment plans should be tailored based on your symptoms, age, lifestyle, future plans for pregnancy, spirituality, relationship with your body, as well as other conditions you may have. Your consent is important. You should **not** feel coerced into procedures you are not fully on board with. Below are some of common treatment options. Offerings will depend on your doctor's practice, expertise, your specific case and perspective, insurance, preferred recovery time, etc.

Hormonal birth control or shots



- Reduces pain & heavy bleeding and delays the growth of fibroids
- Hormonal contraceptives, IUDs, or tranexamic acid pills
- Gonadotropin-releasing (GnRH) hormone agonist injections
- GnRH antagonist pills

Uterine artery embolization (UAE/UFE)

- Tiny needle puncture near groin, bikini line, or wrist
- Blocks blood supply to fibroids & shrinks fibroids size
- Can affect fertility
- Can stand and walk after few hours

Radiofrequency fibroid ablation (RFA)

- Ultrasound guided and radiofrequency waves shrink fibroid size
- Hysteroscopic: through vagina
- Laparoscopic: through small incisions on abdomen
- Effect on fertility yet unknown

Myomectomy

- Surgical removal of fibroids
- Hysteroscopic: through vagina
- Laparoscopic: through small incisions on abdomen
- Open surgery: larger incisions on abdomen. Faster than laparoscopy but longer recovery.
- Preserves fertility, but if uterine walls are scarred, can affect fertility

Focused ultrasound

- Concentrated ultrasound waves under MRI guidance to heat and destroy fibroids
- Offered in very limited number of locations
- Check insurance coverage

Hysterectomy

- Major surgery to remove the uterus and/or ovaries
- Permanently resolves symptoms. No new fibroids can grow.
- Ends fertility & starts menopause right away

5 UTERINE FIBROIDS WELLNESS TIPS



Eat Nutritious Food

Anti-inflammatory diet rich in vegetables, fruits, **leafy greens**, **citrus**, **curcumin** (found in turmeric), **green tea**, and **vitamin D** (fatty fish, supplements)

Reduce alcohol (esp. beer), caffeine & red meat intake



Regular exercise & stress management

Fibroids can cause emotional stress & stress-induced pain. Daily movement like **stretching**, **cardiovascular exercise**, **strength training**, **yoga & meditation** can help manage your symptoms



Consider alternative therapies

Acupuncture, **hemp CBD** have been found to reduce symptoms for some women

Talk to your family about fibroids

Fibroids can run in the family. Talk to your them early so they know what symptoms to look out for. Severe pain and heavy bleeding that interfere with your days are not normal symptoms.



Build a support system

Many women struggle alone with fibroid symptoms in secrecy. Open communication with friends & family so they can better support you. You do not have to do this alone. Join a support group with other Black women:

- [The White Dress Project](#)
- [Fibroid Foundation](#)

HEALTHCARE ADVOCACY TIPS



Talk to your OB-GYN about your period cycles & symptoms



Take stock of your menstrual history, cycle length, duration, and symptoms such as pain, GI, mood, sexual health, fertility. It may be helpful to keep a period diary and bring it to appointment. *Tell your doctor how your periods normally go.*

Write down questions to bring with you



Appointments are often short and going to clinic can be stressful. It can be helpful to organize your thoughts and prioritize your most concerning issues into a list. *What do you need from your provider? What are your goals for your health?*

Tell your doctor early!



Do not wait to tell your doctor about abnormal symptoms like heavy bleeding that soaks through 1 or more pads/tampons every 1-2 hours and/or lasts for more than 5 days. The later you wait, the greater the chance that an open surgery like hysterectomy is the only treatment option.

You deserve to know everything



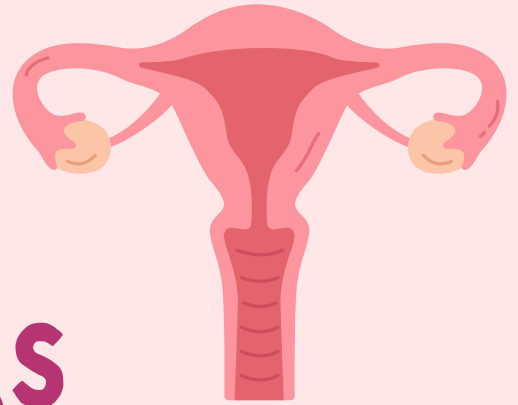
Ask your doctor to **explain all options and post-treatment expectations**. If undergoing surgery, **establish a pain management plan** beforehand. Ask your provider to rule out other conditions like endometriosis, PCOS, cancer, bleeding disorders, or STIs. Sometimes they can provide you with an after visit summary. *You are entitled to seek second, third opinions if you feel that your doctor is not listening to your needs.*

Support during appointment

It can be helpful to bring someone with you for support or have them ready to jump on the phone with you during the first visit. Consider bringing a small personal item that can help you with ground. Breathe. Blink. *You are in charge of your healthcare.*



CALIFORNIA UTERINE FIBROIDS TREATMENT CENTERS



Utilizing the Latest Technology for Uterine Fibroids

RONALD REAGAN UCLA Medical Center

Medical Services and
Team of Specialists :



Stanford Medicine



Medical Services and
Team of Specialists:



BLACK WOMEN FOR WELLNESS



OUR MISSION

Black Women For Wellness is committed to the health and well-being of Black Women and girls through health education, empowerment, and advocacy.



STAY CONNECTED



www.bwwla.org



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