

Uterine fibroid

Uterine Fibroids are a very common gynaecological condition, with up to 1 in 4 women having this in their lifetime.

Fibroids are in fact benign muscle growth from the uterus, and have no cancerous propensity. The exact cause is unknown, but fibroids seem to grow in response to female hormones, and hence, with menopause, the fibroid would usually decrease in size.

Fibroids are usually noted on routine gynaecological screening or when symptoms arise. The exact size and nature of the fibroid, however, usually requires a pelvic ultrasound to confirm.

Fibroids can be present, but would not cause any problems at all. Therefore, in many cases, no particular treatment is required, except for routine monitoring. Only if the following symptoms appear, then one needs to consider treatment:

- 1) increased menstrual bleeding (in amount or number of days), causing anaemia
- 2) causing pelvic pressure or fullness, resulting in constipation or urinary frequency
- 3) >5cm in size, when this could cause an increased risk of preterm delivery in pregnancy

Treatment options include medical treatment to control the amount of bleeding, hormonal treatment, and surgical treatment. For surgical treatment, this would range from uterine artery embolization (treatment that blocks the blood supply to fibroids, and hence shrink the fibroid), to myomectomy (removing the fibroid only), to hysterectomy (removing the whole uterus).

Choice of treatment options would be dependant on symptoms, size of the fibroid, fertility status, age and personal preferences.