

What is “Ovarian Cysts”?

Ovarian Cysts are cysts that are filled with fluid or other material, which forms from the ovaries.

It is normal for little cysts to form from the ovaries, and most would disappear naturally, without any symptoms nor any treatment required.

There are a few types of ovarian cysts, with most of them being benign, but some also has cancerous potential. Some of these types include:

1. Benign Functional Cysts

- a. Usually has clear fluid inside the cysts
- b. During the ovulatory times of the usual menstrual cycle, it is normal to have follicular cysts that arise from the ovaries. These are very common in women of childbearing ages.

2. Chocolate Cysts

- a. These are due to Endometriosis
- b. As the endometrium (the lining of the uterus) abnormally moves out of the uterus, with hormone changes, these patches would also bleed with each cycle, and cause dark brownish yellow cysts, that look like chocolate cysts.

3. Teratoma

- a. The formation of teratoma is due to some special developmental cells. As a result, teeth, cartilage or hair could be found in such cysts
- b. Most are benign, with only a small proportion that are cancerous. This is the most common ovarian cyst among those who are below 20 years old.

4. Ovarian Cancer

- a. These are usually solid tumours, that are not strictly speaking cysts
- b. The death rate related to ovarian cancer is very high, as nearly 70% are only diagnosed at the end stage of the cancer
- c. If ultrasound showed an ovarian mass that is not a pure cystic mass, then, early doctor follow up is strongly advised.

How do I know if I have “Ovarian Cysts” or not? Do I need surgery?

Most of the ovarian cysts are without any symptoms, and hence, most are being found incidentally on pelvic ultrasound on health checkups.

The small, benign cysts only require regular follow up, and no treatment would be required.

However, if the cyst has ruptured or bled, then this might cause abdominal pain, but this still does not require surgery.

However, if there are any of the following symptoms, then, the likelihood of surgery is higher:

1. The cyst is larger than 5cm, and causing frequent urination, constipation etc.
2. If the cyst has suddenly twisted or ruptured, causing acute abdominal pain
3. If there are solid components in the ovarian mass
4. Any ovarian cyst/mass that is >10cm, as the chance of cancer is higher, and usually would not disappear by itself
5. If there is any abdominal swelling, ascites or sudden increase in body weight
6. If the ovarian mass arises before menses started or after menopause