

# Like clockwork

from Dr. Laura Corio, M.D.

Women's Health Issues

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## FibroidsFacts

By my own estimates, 25-50 percent of women develop uterine fibroids at some point in the two decades before menopause. Yet, when I talk to my patients about this, many are surprised to learn this fact -- and many don't even know what I'm talking about. This is an important issue, so let's break down the facts.

### What are fibroids?

Fibroids are tumors, typically non-cancerous, stimulated by the hormone estrogen to burrow within the wall of the uterus. They can grow into the uterine cavity, into the thickness of the uterine wall, or on the surface of the uterus into the abdominal cavity. They can be tiny or they can grow to the size of a grapefruit and weigh several pounds; you can have one or many. If you have a family history, an early onset of menstruation, your overweight or African American, you have an increased risk of developing fibroids.

### What are the symptoms?

Though theoretically harmless they can wreak havoc on a women's menstrual cycle, causing heavy, frequent periods, clotting, cramping, a constant urge to urinate and constipation; they can also cause infertility. Because these symptoms are so common during perimenopause, most of my patients typically don't associate them with fibroids. But if you've had any of these issues recently, please talk to me! It's important we determine the cause, whatever it is. However, many women who have fibroids don't experience any symptoms at all and I wind up catching them at their annual exam.

### What tests should I have?

The first thing I'll do is a pelvic exam so I can feel whether or not your uterus is irregular. If I find something, I'm likely to recommend a transvaginal sonogram, a technique which probes your uterus to provide images and information about what's going on inside. If the issue with fibroids is heavy bleeding we may do an endometrial biopsy where I take some sample tissue from the uterus or a saline sono hysterosalpingogram, also known as Sono-HSG, which utilizes a sterile saline solution to fill the uterus so we can see what's going on in there. There are a host of new tests now available; see page 2 of this newsletter for a discussion of those.

### How are they treated?

If you do have fibroids, we'll either treat them or keep an eye on them. It depends on what I find, what your symptoms are like, whether or not you want to bear children and how close you are to menopause. I may choose to prescribe hormonal treatment such as birth control pills or the Mirena IUD. In some cases if surgery is needed, a myomectomy, which is a surgical removal of the fibroids. In extreme cases you may require a hysterectomy or removal of the uterus. There are some new procedures such as laposcopic approaches or interventional radiology like MRIs or ultrasound and uterine artery embolization. Often as you enter your final years of menopause and your hormone levels wane, fibroids will shrink on their own.

### What's the bottom line?

Heavy bleeding and shortened menstrual cycles are not a normal right of passage into menopause. Often we can do something about them as well as any other symptoms that arise from having fibroids. You don't have to grin and bear it. Make an appointment so we can see what's going on.



### Women and uterine fibroids

25-50 percent of women develop uterine fibroids at some point in the two decades before menopause.



### Dr. Corio's Resources

Would you like this email delivered right to your email inbox? You can sign up to receive a complimentary copy on line: [www.obgyn-ny.com/](http://www.obgyn-ny.com/)

You can now follow me on twitter@[coriomd](https://twitter.com/coriomd).

## PEARLS

**The Question:** Are there any dietary approaches to dealing with fibroids?

**Dr. Corio Says:** Watching your diet may help reduce your chances of getting fibroids or, once you have them, it may keep them from enlarging or multiplying. A diet that's most likely to help is one that's rich in protein and healthy fats and low in high-glycemic carbohydrates that come in the form of junk food and candy. "White" foods like sugar and starch increase insulin, which changes the way estrogen is metabolized, creating compounds that are more likely to cause inflammation and exacerbate fibroid symptoms, including enhanced growth of existing fibroids. I tell my patients to eat organic whenever possible, reduce intake of red meat and increase intake of leafy green veggies. Some studies have shown that eating flax helps the body produce smaller amounts of unhealthy estrogens; flaxseed is high in both fiber and omega-3 fats, which may help reduce inflammation and tumor growth.

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**The Question:** What's new on the horizon for fibroid testing and treatment?

**Dr. Corio Says:** I can do a hysteroscopic myomectomy, a technique used if fibroids are within or bulging into the uterine cavity. In this case, I'll pass a small telescope and video camera through the cervix in order to look inside the uterine cavity and resect the fibroid. A relatively new procedure known as uterine fibroid embolization is a means of blocking the arteries that supply blood to the fibroids. It uses angiographic techniques similar to those used in heart catheterization to place a catheter into the uterine arteries. A radiologist injects small particles into the arteries resulting in the blockage of the arteries feeding the fibroids. A radiologist can use several variations of focused ultrasound surgery done as a non-invasive, outpatient procedure. These use high doses of focused ultrasound waves (HIFU) to destroy uterine fibroids, without affecting any of the other tissues around the fibroid. Lastly, the newest method is known as robotic myomectomy.

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Sources: WebMD, Uptodate.com

## Doctor & Office Hours

### Doctor's Hours

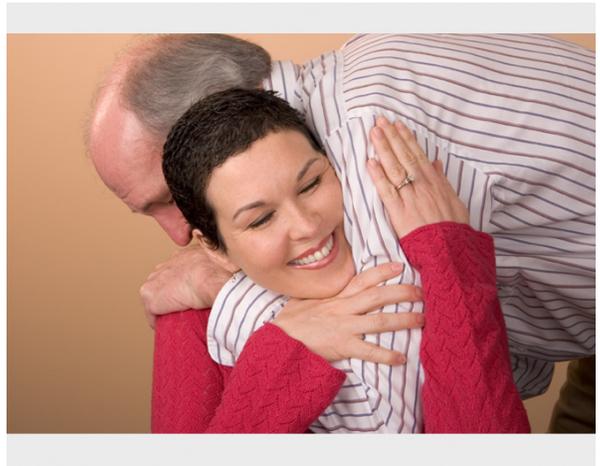
Monday	12:00 PM-6:00 PM
Tuesday	9:00 AM-3:00 PM
Wednesday	9:30 AM-2:30 PM
Thursday	8:00 AM-2:00 PM

### Office Hours

Monday	10:00 AM-5:00 PM
Tuesday – Friday	9:00 AM-4:00 PM

Make an Appointment

Call 646-422-0730 during our normal office hours.



## News Flash

Does dishing with your gal pals lighten your mood? A University of Michigan study has identified a likely reason: feeling emotionally close to a friend increases levels of the hormone progesterone, helping to boost well-being and reduce anxiety and stress. In a study of 160 college students, the progesterone levels of women who had engaged in the emotionally neutral tasks tended to decline, while the progesterone levels of women who engaged in the task designed to elicit closeness either remained the same or increased. The participants' level of cortisol, the so called stress hormone, did not change in a similar way. The researchers say this explains the well-documented benefits of social interaction and why people who have close relationships are happier, healthier and live longer than those who are socially isolated. So go on, give your hubby a hug or your kiddy a cuddle. It feels good and it's good for you.