

LEARNING ABOUT

UTERINE FIBROID EMBOLIZATION



WHAT ARE UTERINE FIBROIDS?

Fibroids are non-cancerous growths in or on the walls of the uterus. They can range in size and are very common; most often occurring in women from their 30s to early 50s.

Fibroids that cause symptoms may lead to surgery.

MOST FIBROIDS DON'T CAUSE SYMPTOMS

But treatment may be needed for fibroids that cause symptoms like:

- Heavy and prolonged menstrual bleeding
- Painful menstrual periods
- Pressure and pain in the abdomen and lower back
- Bloating and swollen abdomen
- Frequent urination
- Constipation
- Nocturia (having to get up in the night)

Treatment of symptoms may include drugs or surgery, including hysterectomy (removal of the uterus) or myomectomy (surgical removal of fibroids from the uterus).

THERE IS A MINIMALLY INVASIVE ALTERNATIVE TO SURGERY

Uterine Fibroid Embolization (UFE) is a minimally invasive procedure that may be an alternative to surgery for the treatment of fibroids. It is used to block blood flow to fibroid tumors of the uterus.

A doctor, called an interventional radiologist, uses X-ray guidance to move a small plastic tube through the groin and into the small arteries which are feeding the fibroids. Then tiny particles are injected into the arteries to starve the fibroid of its blood supply, shrinking it.

UFE PROCEDURES ARE PERFORMED IN CALGARY

UFE procedures are covered under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan. Your doctor or specialist will need to fax a consultation request to Rockyview General Hospital's Diagnostic Imaging department at 403-592-4852.

Once the information has been received, our interventional radiology team will review the request and contact you to arrange a consultation to determine if the procedure is appropriate based on your medical history. There may also be imaging required.

COMPARING UFE AND SURGERY

| UFE Benefits | Surgery Benefits |
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| It's less invasive with no risk of bleeding and other surgical complications. | It's a well-established procedure. |
| Hospital stay is less than 24 hours and recovery from the procedure is often within a week. | Relief from fibroid symptoms is rapid upon recovery from surgery. |

| UFE Risks | Surgery Risks |
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| UFE has a proven clinical history since first performed in 1994, but surgical options have existed longer. | The most common complications from surgery include bleeding, infection, and drug reactions. |
| Usually fibroids affect women in their late fertile age, when the chances of pregnancy are decreased, but current evidence is that normal pregnancies are common after UFE. | Hysterectomy has been associated with long-term physical effects including incontinence and loss of sexual pleasure. |
| Complications associated with UFE include short-term allergic reaction, fibroid passage, and pain. | Hospital stay after surgery could be up to two days, while returning to work or normal activity could take about a month. |
| The fibroids are slowly deprived of blood supply so it may take up to six months for you to see the full benefit, although you should start to feel better after a week. | |

Rev. 10/2022