

Advanced Treatment for your Fibroids

Among the most common tumors in women of childbearing age are uterine fibroids. Uterine fibroids are benign, non-cancerous, growths within or on the muscular walls of the uterus or womb. As many as 20 to 40 percent of women over the age of 35 have fibroids. They can be caused by a combination of genetic, hormonal or environmental factors; however the true cause is unknown. Some women don't even realize they have fibroids and may experience no symptoms at all. In others, fibroids can cause heavy bleeding and excruciating pain during menstruation and can be quite debilitating. Additional typical symptoms can include abdominal, pelvic and back pain. Fibroids can also cause pressure symptoms such as constipation, frequent urination, pain with intercourse and even infertility.

Available treatment options

Traditionally, a woman suffering from these symptoms may only have surgical options, including a hysterectomy, which is the removal of the entire uterus, or a procedure called a myomectomy, the removal of the fibroid. With modern medicine, women who would prefer a non-surgical procedure altogether have an option. One of the most recent treatments available without surgery is called Uterine Fibroid Embolization (UFE). Although this procedure has been performed in the United States for more than a decade, it is a relatively new treatment option that select specially-trained physicians perform.

"UFE is minimally invasive and allows women to get back to their busy lives much faster than with a surgical procedure that takes ample time to recover from," says Dr. Lokesh Arora, interventional radiologist at Orange Coast Memorial Medical Center. Dr. Arora has performed the surgery since 1997 when it was first introduced in the states. "Under light sedation, the entire procedure is complete in about two hours and usually requires an overnight stay in the hospital. There is minimal risk with UFE and serious complications are extremely rare. For most, recovery time is only between one to two weeks."

How UFE works

A very thin tube, called a catheter, is inserted into the uterine artery through a slight incision in the groin blocking the blood supply. Blocking the blood supply allows the fibroids to shrink, therefore alleviating the painful symptoms.

"After years of performing this procedure, we have found that more than 90 percent of patients have had sustained improvement and most are able to go back to regular activity in days. A safe and effective alternative to surgery," says Dr. Arora.

How fibroids are diagnosed

If your symptoms and the results of a physical exam indicate fibroids could be present, then your doctor may order more tests for confirmation. Tests may include Ultrasound, which is a pain-



Interventional Radiologist, Lokesh Arora, M.D., performs the UFE procedure at Orange Coast Memorial Medical Center. He has performed this specialized procedure since 1997 when it was introduced in the US.

less procedure using sound waves to create pictures of the fibroids. MRI may also be called for, and uses magnets and radio waves to create pictures and is very helpful in delineating the types and number of fibroids in the uterus. MRI can also exclude other diagnoses such as adenomyosis or ovarian tumors. Saline Hysterosonography (HSS) uses saline which is inserted into the uterine lining to provide a better look at the lining and possible growths in the lining such as fibroids or polyps.

Candidates for UFE

Pre-menopausal women with the symptoms of uterine fibroids who no longer wish to become pregnant, but want to avoid a hysterectomy, are ideal candidates for the UFE procedure. UFE may also be performed on women who experience severe bleeding following childbirth.

More information on UFE

UFE is performed on a referral basis from your OB/GYN once you are diagnosed. To speak to a specialist about UFE, please call 714-378-7581 or for more information on the procedure, visit Radiologyinfo.org or sirweb.org.