

Women's Health **UPDATE**

What You Need To Know About A Common Health Problem

(NAPSA)—According to the Society of Interventional Radiology, 20 to 40 percent of women, age 35 and older, have uterine fibroids of a significant size. Learning more about these common, benign growths—and how they affect women's health—can be a smart idea.

Q: What are uterine fibroids?

A: Uterine fibroids develop in the muscular wall of the uterus, ranging in size from a quarter of an inch to larger than a cantaloupe. Occasionally, they can cause the uterus to grow to the size of a five-month pregnancy. Uterine fibroids are the most frequent indication for hysterectomy in premenopausal women.

Q: What are the typical symptoms?

A: Most fibroids don't cause symptoms—only 10–20 percent of women who have fibroids require treatment. Depending on size, location and number of fibroids, they may cause:

- Heavy, prolonged menstrual periods and unusual monthly bleeding, sometimes with clots (This can lead to anemia.)

- Pelvic pain and pressure
- Pain in the back and legs
- Pain during sexual intercourse
- Bladder pressure leading to a frequent urge to urinate

- Pressure on the bowel, leading to constipation and bloating

- Abnormally enlarged abdomen.

Q: How are fibroids treated?

A: Uterine fibroid embolization (UFE), also known as uterine artery embolization, is performed by an interventional radiologist, a physician who is trained to perform this and other types of embolization and minimally invasive procedures. The procedure is performed while the patient is conscious—but sedated and feeling no



Women seeking treatment for fibroids should learn all their treatment options. To determine if UFE is an option, many consult an interventional radiologist.

pain. It does not require general anesthesia and usually only a hospital stay of one night. Painkilling medications and drugs that control swelling are prescribed following the procedure.

According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, UFE is “safe and effective.” Women can and should be confident about their decision to consider UFE as a treatment option. An ultrasound or MRI diagnostic test will help an interventional radiologist to determine if a woman is a candidate.

Interventional radiology is a recognized medical specialty by the American Board of Medical Specialties. Interventional radiologists complete preliminary training in diagnostic radiology and advanced training in vascular and interventional radiology.

Q: Where can I learn more?

A: For information on UFE or interventional radiology, visit the SIR website at www.SIRweb.org.