

Uterine Polyps

Uterine polyps are soft red outgrowths from the lining of the womb (the endometrium), usually less than 1 cm in diameter, which often flatten to fit the cavity of the uterus. The stalk of the polyp (or pedicle) is usually short, but sometimes it grows long enough for the polyp to project from the cervix (the lower opening of the womb). Polyps are prone to bleeding, and a uterine polyp that develops near the fallopian tubes may obstruct the opening of the tubes, possibly leading to difficulty with becoming pregnant. Uterine polyps can develop in pre- or post-menopausal women. Very rarely, polyps can be cancerous.

Symptoms

Many women who have uterine polyps show no symptoms at all. In others, one or more of the following symptoms may be present:

- Irregular menstrual bleeding, such as bleeding varying amounts at frequent but unpredictable intervals
- Bleeding between menstrual periods
- Excessively heavy menstrual periods
- Vaginal bleeding after menopause

Diagnosis

Diagnosis is usually established by curettage (scraping out the womb), and examining the tissue in a laboratory— however, larger polyps may be missed at curettage. Other diagnostic techniques include a hystrogram (taking a type of x-ray of inside the womb) and hysteroscopy (where a thin telescopic device is inserted, allowing the surgeon to look inside the womb). It is important that a tissue sample from the polyp be sent for biopsy to rule out cancer.

Treatment

Once identified, polyps can be removed surgically through a hysteroscopy. A general anesthetic is sometimes required for this procedure. Uterine polyps, once removed, can recur. It's possible that you might need to undergo treatment more than once if you experience recurring uterine polyps. If the polyps are found to contain cancerous cells, hysterectomy (removal of the uterus) becomes necessary.

Sources

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/uterine-polyps/DS00699/DSECTION=2>
http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/ask_the_doctor/uterinepolyp.shtml



This factsheet has been produced by Women's Health Concern and reviewed by members of our Medical Advisory Panel.

It is for your information and advice and should be used in consultation with your own medical practitioner. **Updated: November 2007.**