The Truth About Fibroids

If you get them, a hysterectomy is not necessarily your only available option.

July 1, 2005 By Sandrea-Lee Swaby

Each year, more than 70 percent of women develop uterine fibroids, muscular balls of tissue that can cause bleeding, abdominal pain and even lead to infertility. “Black women are more likely to show symptoms and have larger and more numerous fibroids,” says Monique R. Brown, who has had fibroids and is the author of *It’s a Sistah Thing: A Guide to Understanding and Dealing With Fibroids for Black Women*. And the National Uterine Fibroids Foundation (NUFF) reports that black women have hysterectomies (surgical removal of the uterus) for fibroids at twice the rate of white women.

But many of the hysterectomies that women have for fibroids can be avoided, says Francis Hutchins, MD, author of The Fibroid Book and director of the Fibroid Center at Drexel University. “There are many different ways to manage fibroids,” he says, citing hormone treatment, surgical removal, cutting off the fibroids’ blood supply or freezing them.

Stanley West, MD, reproductive endocrinologist at St. Vincent’s Hospital in New York City and author of The Hysterectomy Hoax urges women to “ask your doctor about all your options. Then ask her what she recommends and why.” Most health plans pay for second and third opinions—those of us with coverage need to take advantage of this option more often.

For more info, contact the Center for Uterine Fibroids (www. fibroids.net, 800-722-5520) or visit www.sistah thing.com.

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