She Didn’t Know Fibroids Could Cause Such Intense Pain

During a doctor’s visit for severe pelvic and back pain, Twyla Hubbard, 47, a mom of two, first learned she had a large uterine fibroid.

November 1, 2021 By Kate Ferguson

Besides pelvic pain and backache, what were some of the other symptoms caused by uterine fibroids?

In addition to feeling random intense pelvic cramping and lower back pain, I also experienced a swelling of my abdomen, painful intercourse, bleeding with intercourse, constipation, frequent urination, slower urine stream, and eventually bowel and bladder blockage.

What was one of your worst experiences with uterine fibroids?

My worst experience with uterine fibroids was the morning I woke up to use the restroom and could not urinate. I tried for hours, doing all kinds of home remedies. Eventually the lower half of my body started spasming from the pressure of trying to urinate, and nothing would come out. I drove around from one urgent care to another in more pain than I’d ever felt in my life. I didn’t know what they would do at the urgent care, but I wanted them to do whatever they could to relieve my pain and allow me to urinate. My body spasmed so badly that I felt like I was having contractions every few minutes. You take bodily functions for granted until something so simple as being able to urinate is taken away.

When did you decide to see a doctor?

I decided that same day that I could no longer live like this and that I had to do something immediately about the fibroid.

What was your experience like accessing health care, and how did you feel about the attention you received from the health professionals with whom you interacted?

Initially, when I discussed my fibroid problem with my ob-gyn, the only options presented to me were to manage with pain medication or a hysterectomy. The idea of a hysterectomy was really daunting, and the idea of pain medication only seemed like a short-term solution.

After you saw a doctor, what tests were performed and how long did it take for you to be diagnosed with fibroids?

At first, she performed a vaginal ultrasound. Then, to confirm the diagnosis and measure the size and position of the fibroid, an abdominal ultrasound was also performed. After this 3D ultrasound, she immediately gave me a diagnosis.

How much did you know about uterine fibroids before your diagnosis?

I didn't know anything about fibroids. I was not aware of the condition prior to visiting with my doctor. I am one of five girls in my family and neither my mother nor any of my sisters dealt with fibroids, so it was not anything I expected.

How did you feel after your diagnosis?

I felt lost and confused mainly because other than a pamphlet given to me by my doctor, I still did not feel that I was educated enough on the cause or treatment.

Did your doctor explain what factors may have contributed to your condition?

There were no factors explained about what could have contributed to my condition, other than fibroids are more common within the African-American race.

Did you ever have conversations with a family member about fibroids before or after your diagnosis?

I learned after my diagnosis that my aunt (my mother's sister) dealt with fibroids in her early adult years and that they were recurring.

How has fibroid treatment affected your quality of life in general?

My quality of life has improved significantly. Not being able to have a normal bowel movement or pass urine normally was scary for me.

How have fibroids affected your physical and mental health?

The pressure that they put on my uterus and rectum from all of the pushing to try and urinate or have a bowel movement impacted me emotionally and psychologically and put a strain on my sex life and confidence.

What was your experience with uterine fibroid embolization like?

Once I elected to have the uterine fibroid embolization procedure done at a USA Fibroid Centers location, the rest of the process was pretty simple. My doctor scheduled the MRI after getting the approval from my insurance to cover the procedure. They explained what would happen in detail; what I could expect during and after the procedure; and what my options were for anesthesia. I

opted to be awake during the procedure and I was in and out in just under one hour. The first two days after the procedure were pretty rough. However, my doctor was very up front with me about the level of pain to expect, and we discussed pain management. Within one week, I was able to resume almost all of my normal routines. I kept my activity light and just listened to my body. The pain and discomfort were behind me. This was the best decision I could have made for my active lifestyle.

What advice can you offer other Black women who are experiencing uterine fibroids?

I would advise women that uterine fibroids are a very treatable condition, and that there are other options available for treatment besides a hysterectomy. This is not a one-size-fits-all condition. Talk to your doctor about how you are really feeling and make your voice heard. You do not have to suffer in silence.

How do you continue to manage living with uterine fibroids?

I plan to make an ultrasound part of my yearly checkup. I do not believe insurance will cover this, but I would push to make ultrasounds and scans like this a 100% covered expense.

Besides taking care of your health, what are some of your other personal life goals?

I would love to write and publish a children’s book one day. Some other personal life goals I have besides eating cleaner, exercising more and traveling are to help educate women about fibroids, as well as to educate myself on the topic. I want to have the conversation early with my daughter so that she will know what signs to look for as she gets older.

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