

Uterine Fibroids May Increase Heart Disease Risk

Black women are about three times more likely to develop uterine fibroids compared with white women.

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Women with [uterine fibroids](#) may be at a higher risk of developing [heart disease](#) later in life, according to an [American Heart Association](#) (AHA) news release.

Uterine fibroids are noncancerous growths of the uterus (womb) that most often appear during a woman's childbearing years. As many as one in five women may have fibroids during their childbearing years. Black women, however, are three times more likely to develop uterine fibroids compared with white women, according to Real Health's [Basics on Uterine Fibroids](#).

About 20% to 80% of women develop fibroids by age 50. Most often, they occur in women ages 40 and older but may also occur in women under age 35 and those in their early 20s.

Published in the [Journal of the American Heart Association](#), the new study analyzed data on more than 450,000 women diagnosed with uterine fibroids from 2000 to 2022. Researchers looked for cases of coronary artery disease, including [heart attack](#), cerebrovascular disease ([stroke](#) and related conditions) and peripheral artery disease.

Women with uterine fibroids had an 81% higher risk of developing long-term heart disease compared with those without fibroids.

"Nearly 26 million premenopausal women in the U.S. are impacted by uterine fibroids and many do not experience any symptoms. Yet despite the high prevalence, fibroids are understudied and poorly understood," study author Julia DiTosto, MS, a PhD candidate in epidemiology at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, told the AHA. "Some studies have shown that fibroids and cardiovascular disease share biological pathways, including the growth of smooth muscle cells, the excessive buildup of fibrous connective tissue, calcification and

inflammatory responses.”

What’s more, according to the AHA, researchers found:

- After 10-years of follow-up, women with fibroids were at higher risk for all three major conditions (coronary artery, cerebrovascular and peripheral artery diseases).
- More than 5.4% of women with fibroids had experienced a cardiovascular event compared with 3% of women without fibroids.
- Women diagnosed with uterine fibroids were at increased heart disease risk across all racial and ethnic groups (white, Black, Latino and Asian groups).
- Among women under age 40, the risk for cardiovascular disease was 251% higher (or more than 3.5 times more likely) in those with fibroids compared to those without fibroids.

“We set out to address these critical gaps using a large, diverse dataset with extended follow-up,” DiTosto said. “Our findings suggest that fibroids may serve as an important marker for identifying women at elevated cardiovascular risk, with sustained increased risk persisting up to 10 years after diagnosis.”

Although most uterine fibroids cause no symptoms and are often discovered during routine pelvic examinations, the following symptoms may indicate their presence:

- Heavy, prolonged monthly periods, sometimes with clots
- Anemia (fatigue due to low red blood cell count)
- Pain or pressure between the hip bones or in the back of the legs
- Pain during sexual intercourse
- Frequent need to urinate
- Constipation or bloating
- Palpable mass in the abdomen
- Feeling full when eating.

“The strength of the relationship between heart disease risk and uterine fibroids was striking,” DiTosto said. “However, it’s important to note that more research is needed to confirm these findings in other populations before formal changes are made to cardiovascular risk assessment guidelines. In the meantime, these results support having thoughtful conversations between women and their providers about heart health in the context of a fibroid diagnosis.”

To learn more, click [#Uterine Fibroids](#) or [#Heart Disease](#). There, you’ll see headlines such as “[Highlighting Racial Disparities in Ovarian Cancer Risk](#),” “[Latinas, Black Women Less Likely to Get Minimally Invasive Fibroid Surgery](#)” and “[Uterine Fibroids: Can Lifestyle Changes Help?](#)”

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