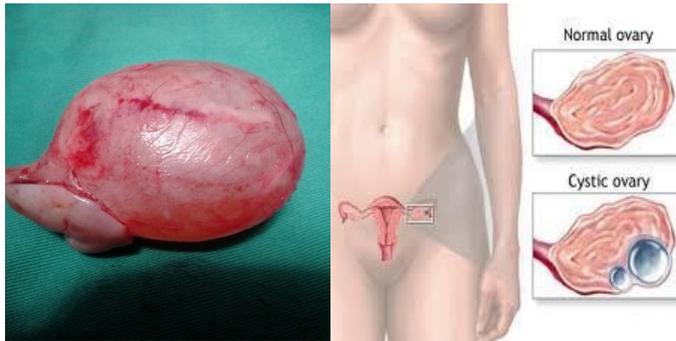


Ovarian Cysts

What are ovarian cysts?

A cyst is a fluid-filled sac. They can form anywhere in the body. Ovarian cysts form in or on the ovaries. The most common type of ovarian cyst is a functional cyst.



*Ovarian cyst removed after surgery

Functional cysts often form during the menstrual cycle. The two types are:

- **Follicle cysts.** These cysts form when the sac doesn't break open to release the egg. Then the sac keeps growing. This type of cyst most often goes away in 1 to 3 months.
- **Corpus luteum cysts.** These cysts form if the sac doesn't dissolve. Instead, the sac seals off after the egg is released. Then fluid builds up inside. Most of these cysts go away after a few weeks. They can grow to almost 4 inches. They may bleed or twist the ovary and cause pain. They are rarely cancerous. Some drugs used to cause ovulation, such as Clomid® can raise the risk of getting these cysts.

Other types of ovarian cysts are:

- **Endometriomas .** These cysts form in women who have endometriosis (EN-doh-MEE-tree-OH-suhss). This problem occurs when tissue that looks and acts like the lining of the uterus grows outside the uterus. The tissue may attach to the ovary and form a growth. These cysts can be painful during sex and during your period.
- **Cystadenomas.** These cysts form from cells on the outer surface of the ovary. They are often filled with a watery fluid or thick, sticky gel. They can become large and cause pain.
- **Dermoid cysts.** These cysts contain many types of cells. They may be filled with hair, teeth, and other tissues that become part of the cyst. They can become large and cause pain.

What are the symptoms of ovarian cysts?

Many ovarian cysts don't cause symptoms. Others can cause:

- Pressure, swelling, or pain in the abdomen
- Pelvic pain
- Dull ache in the lower back and thighs
- Problems passing urine completely
- Pain during sex
- Weight gain
- Pain during your period
- Abnormal bleeding
- Nausea or vomiting
- Breast tenderness

What is the danger of ovarian cysts?

Ovarian cysts of more than 5 cm if left untreated or without a proper surveillance it may get complicated. The complications include:

- It get twisted causing severe abdominal pain
- It may rupture causing peritonitis
- It may bleed into the cyst, causing it to grow in size dramatically
- It may change into cancerous

If complications occur, **EMERGENCY SURGERY is required.**

How are ovarian cysts investigated?

Doctors most often find ovarian cysts during routine pelvic exams. The doctor may feel the swelling of a cyst on the ovary. Once a cyst is found, tests are done to help plan treatment. Tests include:

- **An ultrasound.** This test uses sound waves to create images of the body. With an ultrasound, the doctor can see the cyst's:
 - Shape
 - Size
 - Location
 - Mass — if it is fluid-filled, solid, or mixed
- **A blood test.** This test is done to find out if the cyst may be cancerous. The test measures a substance in the blood called cancer-antigen 125 (CA-125). The amount of CA-125 is higher with ovarian cancer. The CA-125 test is most often given to women who:
 - Are older than 35
 - Are at high risk for ovarian cancer
 - Have a cyst that is partly solid

How we can help you if you have ovarian cysts?

Watchful waiting. If you have a cyst, you may be told to wait and have a second exam in 1 to 3 months. Your doctor will check to see if the cyst has changed in size. This is a common treatment option for women who:

- Are in their childbearing years
- Have no symptoms
- Have a fluid-filled cyst

It may be an option for postmenopausal women.

Surgery. Surgery may be the best option if you are postmenopausal, or if it:

- Doesn't go away after several menstrual cycles
- Gets larger
- Looks odd on the ultrasound
- Causes pain

The two main surgeries are:

- **Laparoscopy** – Done if the cyst is small and looks benign (noncancerous) on the ultrasound. While you are under general anesthesia, a very small cut is made above or below your navel. A small instrument that acts like a telescope is put into your abdomen. Then your doctor can remove the cyst.
- **Laparotomy** – Done if the cyst is large and may be cancerous. While you are under general anesthesia, larger incisions are made in the stomach to remove the cyst. The cyst is then tested for cancer. If it is cancerous, the doctor may need to take out the ovary and other tissues, like the uterus. **If only one ovary is taken out, your body is still fertile and can still produce estrogen.**

Birth control pills. If you keep forming functional cysts, you may be prescribed birth control pills to stop you from ovulating. If you don't ovulate, you are less likely to form new cysts.

Can ovarian cysts be prevented?

No, ovarian cysts cannot be prevented. The good news is that most cysts:

- Don't cause symptoms
- Are not cancerous
- Go away on their own

Call for appointment with your doctor if you notice:

- Changes in your period
- Pain in the pelvic area
- Any of the major symptoms of cysts