



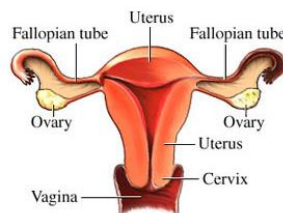
Ovarian Cysts

Information for patients

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What are ovaries?

You have two of these grape-sized organs in your tummy either side of your womb. They contain millions of eggs. When you reach puberty, chemicals from your brain tell the ovaries to ripen and release one egg from a fluid-filled pocket each month.



What are ovarian cysts?

A cyst is a pocket of fluid that can develop on an ovary either as part of the way the ovary normally works (functional), or not (non-functional). They can vary in size from a few centimetres to the size of a melon.

What symptoms can they cause?

Most cysts go unnoticed. However if they are large symptoms can include:

- Sharp or dull, lower or central tummy pain
- Swollen tummy
- Frequent urinating
- Irregular or heavy periods

How common are ovarian cysts?

Cysts are very common in girls and women of all ages. It is normal for newborn baby girls to have cysts, which may be seen on antenatal ultrasounds. One in ten girls who haven't gone through puberty may have a cyst (bigger than 1cm).

What happens if I have a cyst?

You may have an ultrasound scan if you are experiencing any of these symptoms. This is not painful or dangerous. Gel is applied to your skin and a sensor is moved firmly over your tummy. The pictures can tell us the size of any cyst and what it is made up of.

Treatment will depend on your symptoms, the cyst size and its appearance on scan. If it is small and looks functional, no treatment is needed. If it is large, causing pain or appears non-functional, it may need removal. This can usually be done with keyhole surgery. Recovery from this type of operation is usually quick. One in ten women may need surgery for a cyst at some point in their lives.

Can cysts be dangerous?

Occasionally, cysts can twist on themselves (torsion). This can cut off the blood supply to the ovary. If you experience very severe pain you should go to your nearest emergency department immediately so that you can have an operation to save the ovary.

Extremely rarely, a cyst can be a malignant tumour (cancer). If there is any concern that a cyst might be cancerous then the ovary will need to be removed and further treatment may be needed. A doctor would discuss this with you in more detail.