

Which Treatments for Uterine Fibroids Have the Best Results?

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What was the research about?

Uterine fibroids are growths in the uterus that are not cancer. They are one of the most common and costly health problems in women of childbearing age. Fibroids are most common in women aged 35 to 45. More research is needed to know the benefits and risks of these treatments.

In this study, the research team compared the health records for women who received one of three treatments. All three of these treatments try to save as much of the uterus as possible. The research team wanted to learn how well the treatments delayed new or recurring symptoms and helped patients avoid follow-up treatments. The three treatments were

- **Endometrial ablation.** This is surgery to destroy a thin layer of the lining of the uterus (called the endometrium) to stop bleeding caused by uterine fibroids. This treatment is the most common of the three.
- **Myomectomy.** This is surgery to remove uterine fibroids (also called myomas).
- **Uterine artery embolization.** This is surgery to block the flow of blood to uterine fibroids. This treatment causes the fibroids to shrink.

What were the results?

- **New or recurring symptoms.** All three treatments worked about the same to prevent or delay new or recurring symptoms.

- **Having follow-up treatments.** Both uterine artery embolization and myomectomy were somewhat better than endometrial ablation at helping patients avoid follow-up treatments.

Who was in the study?

The research team looked at electronic medical records and insurance claims for 12,234 patients who received treatment for uterine fibroids. The average patient age was 44.

What did the research team do?

The research team used information from two large national data networks. The team looked at records for patients who had uterine fibroids and received one of the three treatments between January 1, 2005, and December 31, 2011. The electronic medical records and insurance claims had no information that could identify the patients. The research team used at least two years of health record data for each patient.

The research team worked with women who had uterine fibroids, doctors, and health insurers to plan the study. This group helped make sure the research focused on what was most important to them.

What were the limits of the study?

This study used treatment information from electronic medical records and insurance claims. Sometimes there are problems in using this information for health research. For example, some information was missing. Also, different electronic records recorded information in different ways. Finally, the records didn't give reasons for why patients had certain treatments.

These limits are common in studies that use electronic medical records and insurance claims.

Future studies could track patients who are currently getting treatment for uterine fibroids. The studies could look at information not often noted in medical records. This information could include patients' reasons for choosing certain treatments.

How can people use the results?

Women with uterine fibroids and their doctors may consider using the results from this study when they talk about treatment options.

To learn more about this project, visit pcori.org/Velentgas002.