

Your Health Reference Sheet

Topic: Fibrocystic Disease & Fibroids

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Up to 50 percent of women will experience some form of fibrocystic disease within their estrogen-producing years, whether it's breast cysts, lumps and nodules, or fibroids in the uterus. In fact, fibrocystic disease is one of the most common gynecologic complaints because of the discomfort and concern it creates.

While fibrocystic disease is usually associated with breast cysts, lumps, and nodules, and generally isn't clinically associated with uterine fibroids, for the purpose of this discussion, they will all be referred to as fibrocystic disease. This is because they all share intrinsic similarities. These similarities include:

- They're not really diseases, but more natural physiological conditions.
- They're linked to hormone changes.
- They're rooted in chronic inflammation.
- They have lump-like qualities.
- They involve fibrous tissue, whether it's in their composition or in the tissue where they're found.
- They vary in size and are usually slow growing.
- They tend to occur between the ages of 35 and 50.
- They're more common in African American women than Caucasian women.
- They become more pronounced and cause discomfort during the menstrual cycle.
- They're harmless, meaning they're benign.
- They decrease in size after menopause.
- They represent emotional toxic dump sites.
- They're psychologically associated with the struggle to embrace one's femininity without embracing gender expectations.

General Description:

Fibrocystic disease refers to the body's tendency to create cysts and fibroids. These cysts and fibroids can occur anywhere in the body. However, in the female body, they tend to form in two specific areas: the breasts and the uterus. Breast cysts are referred to as *cystic mastitis*, and breast fibroids are referred to as *fibroadenomas* (nodules). Uterine fibroids are referred to as *myomas* or *fibromas*. Cysts and fibroids can be as small as a pea or, in the case of uterine fibroids, as large as a grapefruit. A woman can have only one cyst or fibroid, or as many as a dozen.

The difference between a cyst and a fibroid is:

A cyst is a closed sac- or bladder-like structure that isn't a normal part of the tissue where it's located.

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