

Learn About Ovarian Cysts

Ovarian cysts are fluid-filled sacs in the ovary. They are very common and usually form during ovulation (when the ovary releases an egg each month).

Cysts are usually harmless and go away on their own. Some people with ovarian cysts have pain, but most don't have any symptoms.

The most common causes include:

- Hormonal problems
- Endometriosis (a condition where uterine cells grow outside the uterus)
- Pregnancy
- Severe pelvic infections

Cancerous cysts (ovarian cancer) are rare, but do occur. They are more common in older people and during post-menopause. For this reason, ovarian cysts should be checked by your doctor.

Symptoms

Most ovarian cysts are small and don't cause symptoms. If a cyst does cause symptoms, you may have:

- Pelvic pain
- Pain during sex
- Dull ache in the lower back and thighs
- More frequent urination
- Problems emptying the bladder or bowel completely

If you have more severe symptoms like sharp pain with nausea and vomiting, see a doctor right away.

Diagnosis & Treatment

If a cyst is found, your doctor may advise you to get tests to identify its type and the right treatment. Tests include:

- **Ultrasound** to see where and how big the cyst is.
- **Pregnancy test** to rule out pregnancy.
- **Hormone level tests** to see if there are hormone-related problems.
- **Blood test** to check for CA-125, a protein often found in the blood and urine of those with ovarian cancer.

Treatment will depend on the type and size of cyst, symptoms, and other factors. Your doctor may suggest:

- **Waiting** a few months before another checkup. The cyst may go away on its own.
- **Birth control pills** to lower your risk of getting new cysts and ovarian cancer.
- **Surgery** to remove the cyst if it doesn't go away, gets larger, causes pain, or may be cancer.

There is no way to prevent ovarian cysts. The best way to detect any changes is to get regular pelvic checkups.



CHARLES B. WANG
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER
王嘉廉社區醫療中心

General Info Line (212) 226-8339

Website www.cbwchc.org

268 Canal Street, New York, NY 10013

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