



## DECISION AID

### Uterine fibroids:

### What are your treatment options?

If you're reading this, you've probably been diagnosed with uterine fibroids. These are benign (non-cancerous) growths in or on your womb. They may cause heavy periods, as well as abdominal pain or a feeling of pressure in the abdomen. Certain fibroids may also affect fertility.

There are various treatment options for uterine fibroids. Hormone treatments can relieve the symptoms and slow the growth of the fibroids. It is also possible to have the fibroids removed or shrunk, or to have the entire womb removed.

The aim of this decision aid is to help you choose a suitable treatment together with your doctors. If you live in Germany and your doctor has recommended a hysterectomy, you have the right to get a second medical opinion.

#### THESE ARE THE TREATMENT OPTIONS:

<b>Hormone therapy</b>	[	Hormonal contraceptives (birth control pills and hormonal coils)
	—	GnRH agonists and antagonists
<b>Procedures</b>	[	Uterine artery (fibroid) embolization
	—	Surgery to remove the fibroids (myomectomy)
	—	Surgery to remove the womb (hysterectomy)

*You can read about the pros and cons of these treatments on the next pages.*

There are also other treatments that use heat to destroy fibroids. Their advantages and disadvantages have not yet been studied enough, though. Painkillers may be used for a while to relieve acute symptoms. There is no scientific proof that other treatments, such as natural remedies, work.

#### MAKING AN INFORMED DECISION

This decision aid probably won't include all of the information that you need. You will still have to talk to a doctor, but the decision aid can help you. Your treatment decision will depend on various things, including

- which symptoms the treatment should improve,
- how many fibroids you have, how big they are, and where they are,
- your age, and
- whether you want to have children.



Even if you find your symptoms very distressing: Take the time to find out what you want to know and don't let anyone pressure you into choosing a certain treatment.

## PROS AND CONS OF HORMONE THERAPY

	Birth control pill	Hormonal coils (IUDs)	GnRH agonists	GnRH antagonists
<b>What does the treatment involve?</b>	Birth control pills are taken once a day. Either with a monthly break or continuously (without a break).	The hormonal coil is placed inside the womb, and can be left there for 3 to 8 years.	Hormone injections, given every 1 or 3 months. Only suitable for short-term treatment (up to 6 months).	One tablet is taken each day.
<b>Who is the treatment suitable for?</b>	For women who don't currently want to become pregnant.	For women who don't currently want to become pregnant. Only possible if the fibroids aren't too big.	For women who don't currently want to become pregnant. This treatment is typically done to prepare for surgery.	For women who don't currently want to become pregnant.
<b>How much can the treatment help?</b>	Can reduce heavy periods and prevent anemia. There is no good-quality research on whether they relieve fibroid-related pain and cramping.	Can reduce heavy periods and prevent anemia. Doesn't affect symptoms caused by fibroids.	Can reduce heavy periods and shrink the fibroids. Smaller fibroids can be removed using gentler surgical procedures. Fibroids grow again after treatment. Fibroid symptoms usually return too.	Can reduce heavy periods and relieve pain.
<b>What are the possible disadvantages of treatment?</b>	Headaches, dizziness, breast tenderness, mood swings.  The pill increases the risk of thrombosis.	Acne, spotting, mood swings and breast tenderness.	Hot flashes, sweating, or vaginal infections.	Headaches, hot flashes, or spotting between periods.

## PROS AND CONS OF THE VARIOUS PROCEDURES

	Uterine artery (fibroid) embolization	Surgery to remove fibroids (myomectomy)	Hysterectomy (surgery to remove the womb)
<b>What does the treatment involve?</b>	In uterine artery embolization, a catheter is inserted into an artery in the groin and gently pushed through to the fibroid using X-ray imaging as a guide. The fibroid's blood vessels are blocked using tiny particles, causing the fibroid to shrink.	The fibroids are surgically removed. The surgery is performed through a larger cut across the abdominal wall (laparotomy), small cuts in the abdomen (laparoscopy), or the vagina. The womb is not removed.	The womb is removed together with the fibroids through the abdominal wall (laparotomy), small cuts in the abdomen (laparoscopy), or the vagina.
<b>Who is the treatment suitable for?</b>	For women with certain types of fibroids as an alternative to myomectomy (fibroid removal) or hysterectomy (womb removal). Usually only for women who don't want to have children.	For most women who have fibroids. If the fibroids are very large or there are a lot of them, this type of surgery may not be possible.	For women who don't wish to have children. For women who have a lot of large fibroids that can't be treated in any other way.
<b>How much can the treatment help?</b>	The symptoms improve in about 80 to 90 out of 100 women, but sometimes only temporarily. About 15 out of 100 women have treatment again within two years.	The symptoms improve in about 90 out of 100 women. But new fibroids can grow, causing the symptoms to recur. That happens in about 25 out of 100 women.	Women no longer have fibroid symptoms after this surgery.
<b>Can you still have children after the treatment?</b>	Yes, but you may be less fertile. The risk of miscarriage increases too.	Yes	No
<b>What are the possible disadvantages of treatment?</b>	Pain, injury to blood vessels, inflammation, detached fibroid passing out of vagina. Recovery time is faster compared to myomectomy or hysterectomy.	Injury to abdominal organs or other complications (in about 5 out of 100 operations). General risks associated with surgery, such as infections or wound-healing problems.	Injury to abdominal organs or other complications (in about 5 out of 100 operations). General risks associated with surgery, such as infections or wound-healing problems.

## YOUR DECISION

You can now weigh the pros and cons of the different treatments for yourself. Which of them are better suited to you and your life circumstances, and which of them aren't?

### WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU?

You can use this table to note the main issues for you when considering the options. Which of them will affect your decision? How important are they to you? Mark the statements that apply to you, and add any thoughts of your own. Ranking the statements could help: For instance, you could mark the statements that are especially important to you with a 1, those that are a little less important with a 2, and so on.

Which statements apply to you?		Your ranking (1, 2, ...)
I wonder whether hormone therapy could help.	<input type="radio"/>	
I'm worried about the side effects of hormones.	<input type="radio"/>	
I wonder whether surgery could help.	<input type="radio"/>	
I'm worried about the risks of surgery.	<input type="radio"/>	
I'd still like to be able to get pregnant.	<input type="radio"/>	
My symptoms are so distressing that I definitely want a treatment with a permanent effect.	<input type="radio"/>	
I've already tried medications but they didn't help enough.	<input type="radio"/>	
I've already had an operation but it didn't help enough.	<input type="radio"/>	
	<input type="radio"/>	
	<input type="radio"/>	

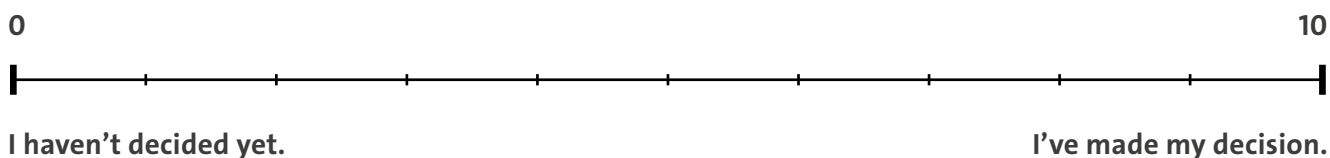
## WHICH TREATMENT WOULD YOU CONSIDER?

You can use this table to assess the different treatments. Mark the ones you would consider and write down what you like and don't like about them.

Which treatment would you consider?		What do you like about it?	What don't you like about it?
Birth control pill	<input type="radio"/>		
Hormonal coil (IUD)	<input type="radio"/>		
GnRH agonists	<input type="radio"/>		
GnRH antagonists	<input type="radio"/>		
Uterine artery (fibroid) embolization	<input type="radio"/>		
Surgery to remove fibroids (myomectomy)	<input type="radio"/>		
Surgery to remove the womb (hysterectomy)	<input type="radio"/>		

## HOW FAR HAVE YOU GOT WITH YOUR DECISION?

You can use this section to record how far along you are in your decision-making process. Mark where you are on a scale of 0 to 10.








If you still aren't sure and need more help, you can find some tips and more information on the following pages.

## WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED IN ORDER TO MAKE A DECISION?

With all the different pros and cons to consider, it can be hard to choose a treatment. Then the following might help:

<b>Knowledge</b> If you feel that you don't have enough information:	<input type="checkbox"/> Write down your questions. <input type="checkbox"/> Make notes on where you could get answers (for example, on the internet, at the library, or from healthcare professionals or counselors). <input type="checkbox"/> If you're considering a hysterectomy: In Germany, you have the right to seek a second medical opinion. You can find out more about that option on the next page. <input type="checkbox"/> There you will also find links to further information.
<b>Importance to you</b> If you aren't sure which pros and cons are most important to you:	<input type="checkbox"/> Talk with people who know about these pros and cons from their own experience. <input type="checkbox"/> Speak to others who have already made the same kind of decision. <input type="checkbox"/> Read about others who were in a similar situation and see what mattered most to them. <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss with other people what is most important to you.
<b>Support</b> If you feel you aren't getting the support you need:	<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss the various options with a trusted person (for instance, with your doctor, someone in your family, or a friend). <input type="checkbox"/> Take this decision aid with you to your next appointment and talk about it with your doctor. <input type="checkbox"/> Contact patient advice services or a support group. You will find more information about this on the next page. <input type="checkbox"/> Seek help to support your choice (like financial support, childcare, transport for appointments, or someone to go with you).
If you feel pressured by others to choose a certain option:	<input type="checkbox"/> Focus on those people's opinions that matter to you the most. <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss this decision aid with others. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask someone else to fill in this decision aid. Where do your answers match? If you disagree on the facts, get more information. If you disagree on what matters most, consider the other person's point of view. Take turns listening to what matters most to the other person. <input type="checkbox"/> Find a neutral person to help you and the other people who are involved.

**YOU WILL FIND IN-DEPTH INFORMATION ABOUT THE FOLLOWING TOPICS ON THE INTERNET:**

	<b>Fibroids and the treatment options</b> <a href="http://www.informedhealth.org/uterine-fibroids.html">www.informedhealth.org/uterine-fibroids.html</a>
	<b>At the hospital</b> <a href="http://www.informedhealth.org/at-the-hospital.html">www.informedhealth.org/at-the-hospital.html</a>
	<b>Surgery</b> <a href="http://www.informedhealth.org/surgery.html">www.informedhealth.org/surgery.html</a>
	<b>Second medical opinion</b> <a href="http://www.informedhealth.org/second-opinion-before-surgery.html">www.informedhealth.org/second-opinion-before-surgery.html</a>
	<b>Patient advice services and support groups</b> <a href="http://www.informedhealth.org/support-groups-and-information-centers">www.informedhealth.org/support-groups-and-information-centers</a>

**PREPARING FOR THE DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT**

Do you still have any questions or concerns? Write down your questions or your own thoughts to discuss with the doctor.

There's a list of possible questions here:

[www.informedhealth.org/questions](http://www.informedhealth.org/questions)

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## PUBLISHING DETAILS

Institute for Quality and Efficiency in  
Health Care (IQWiG, Germany)

[www.informedhealth.org/about-us](http://www.informedhealth.org/about-us)

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The format of this decision aid is based on the following:

- Ottawa Personal Decision Guide. O'Connor, Stacey, Jacobsen 2012. Ottawa Hospital Research Institute and University of Ottawa, Canada.
- MAKING SDM A REALITY – Hospital-wide shared decision making – G-BA Innovation fund 2023.
- Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG, Germany). Development of a decision aid for hysterectomy: Rapid Report; Commission P18-01. 2019.