

# Coming Home to our Female Body

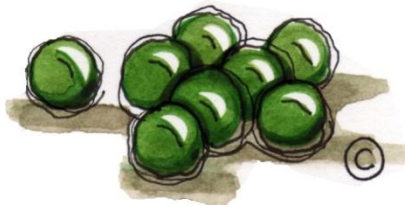
Uterine Fibroids and Uterine  
Health

# What are Uterine Fibroids?

- Uterine fibroids, also called leiomyomas (leio meaning smooth; myomas meaning a common benign fibroid tumor on the uterine muscle), are benign (not cancer) growths in the uterus.

They are the most common type of growth found in a woman's pelvis. In some women, fibroids remain small and do not cause symptoms or problems. However, in some women, fibroids can cause problems because of their size, number, and location.

# Fibroid Sizes



Pea

Size

1 cm



Walnut

3 cm



Lemon

5.5 cm



Pear

7.5 cm



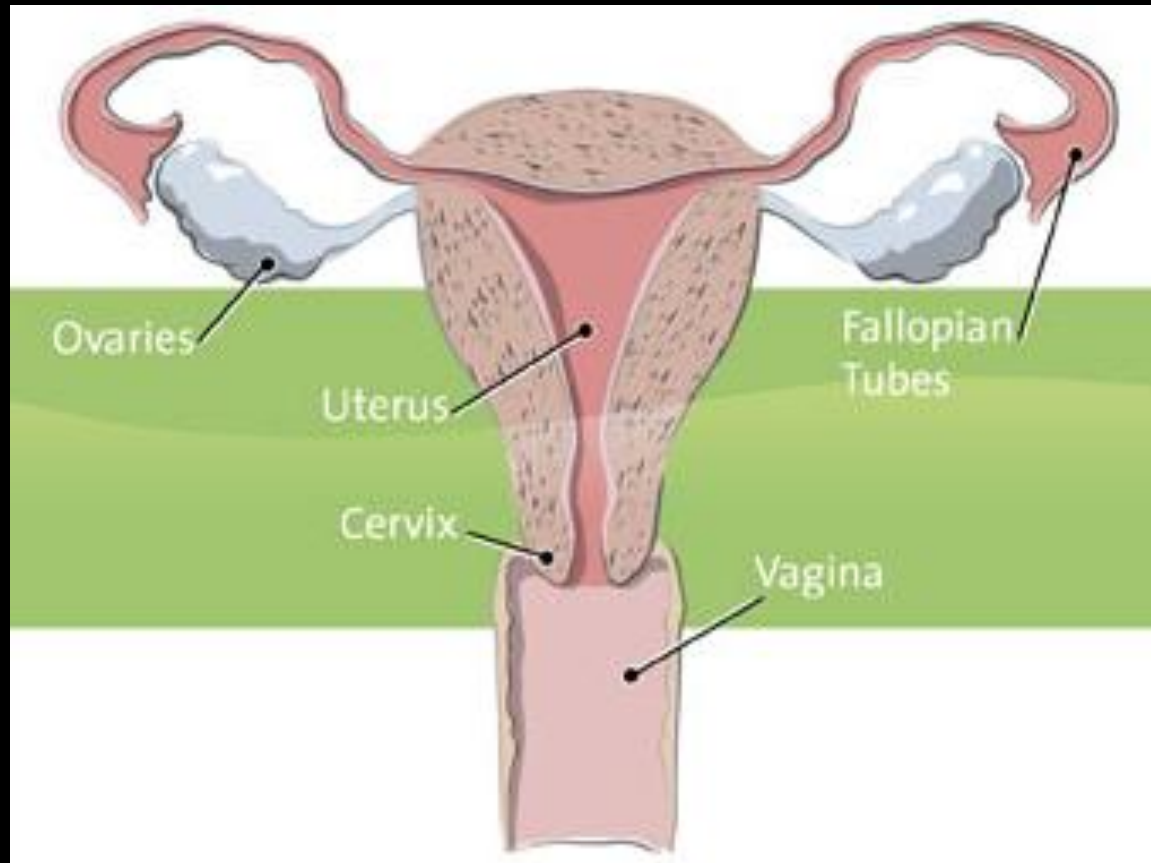
Orange

9 cm



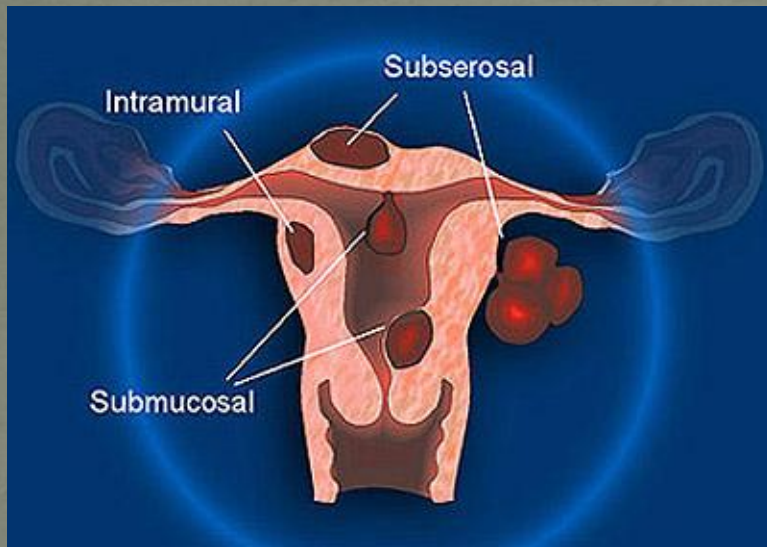
Grapefruit

11.5 cm



**Anatomy of the Uterus**

# Where can they be located?



Fibroids arise from the smooth muscle and connective tissue of the uterine muscle itself. They can form on the **inside** or **outside** of the uterus; **above**, **below** or on the **side** of it.

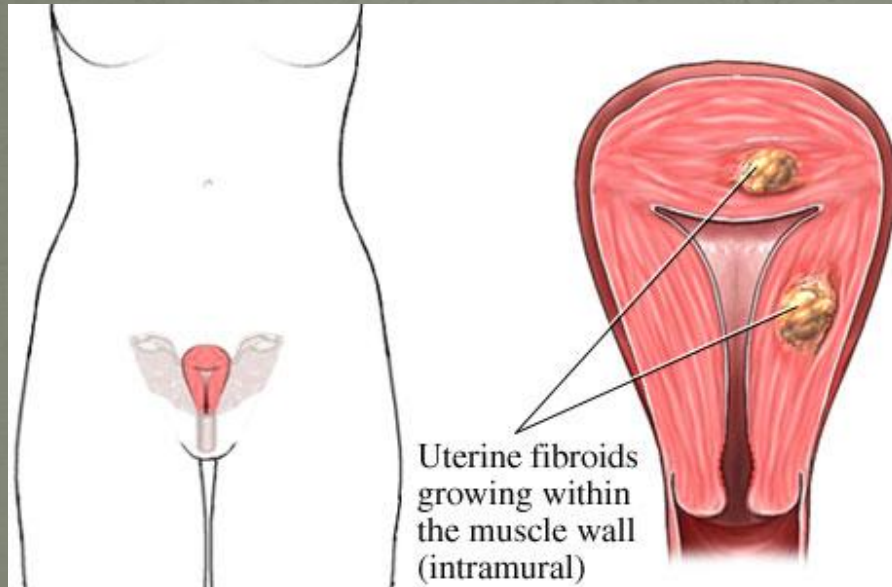
A fibroid may start to degenerate if it outgrows its blood supply, causing the nerves at the center of the fibroid to register a lack of oxygen as pain, in the same way that frostbitten toes do.

Sometimes the positioning of the fibroid causes symptoms by pushing on another organ, such as the rectum or the bladder, leading to a sensation of pressure or fullness in the rectum, lower back, or abdomen.

A fibroid's positioning can also interfere with pregnancy in some cases.



# Intramural Fibroids

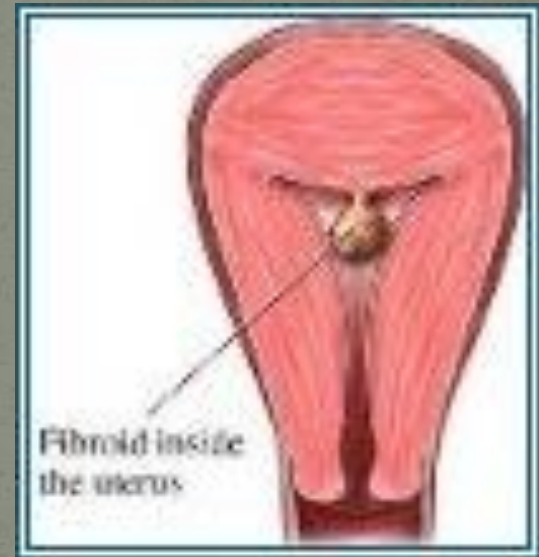


*Intramural* myomas are in the wall of the uterus, and can range in size from microscopic to larger than a grapefruit. The uterus can become enlarged as the intramural fibroid grows.

Many of these do not cause problems unless they become quite large. There are a number of alternatives for treating these, but often they do not need any treatment at all.

# Submucosal Fibroids

Fibroids that are **inside** the cavity of the uterus, in the uterine lining and may cause bleeding between periods and often cause severe cramping.



What can cause Fibroids?



## Hormonal Imbalances

Uterine fibroids, like breast fibrocysts, may be a product of estrogen dominance (too much estrogen).

Let's find out how this works

# Hormones

Hormones are powerful **chemical messengers** that circulate through your bloodstream to specific target cells where they generate a wide range of biological responses. Think of hormones as the "**prime movers**" of your physical and emotional well being.

In the human body, hormones influence almost every cell, organ and function. They regulate our

- growth, development and reproduction,
- metabolism,
- the way our bodies use food,
- the reaction of our bodies to emergencies
- and even our moods.



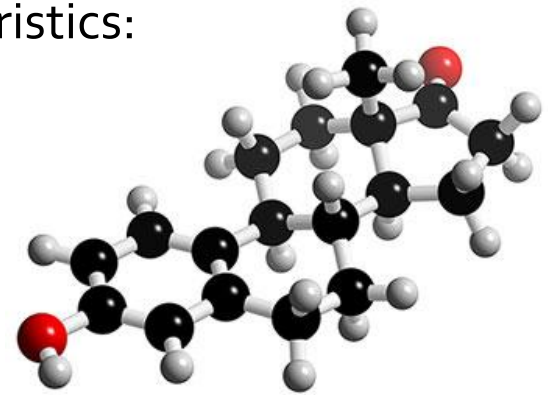
# Estrogen

*estrogen* = estrus (period of fertility for female mammals) + *gen* = to generate

The term "estrogen" refers to any of a group of chemically similar hormones, present in both men and women, though much more predominant in females.

Estrogen gives us women some distinctive characteristics:

- Widened pelvis
- Breasts
- Increased amounts of body fat in the buttock, thigh and hip region.
- Less facial hair and smoother skin than men.



# Where is Estrogen made?

Estrogens are made **within our bodies** and **outside our bodies**.

**Within our bodies**, estrogen is manufactured mostly in the **ovaries** and by the placenta, when a woman is pregnant.

The **liver**, **breasts** and adrenal glands also contribute to estrogen production, although in smaller quantities.

Estrone, Estradiol,  
Estriol...

...3 types of Estrogen produced  
inside of our bodies

## Before Menopause

**Estrone** - made in the ovaries before menopause, and after that by the adrenal glands. Postmenopausal estrone is stored in body fat and muscle cells. Estrone production goes down during pregnancy, which reduces your lifetime exposure to estrogen.

**Estradiol** - like estrone, this is made in the ovaries, and less is created during pregnancy.

**Estriol** - made by the placenta during pregnancy. This kind of estrogen is produced in the greatest quantities (more than estrone or estradiol) during pregnancy. Estriol production is an indicator of the health of your baby.





## During Menopause

The production of estrogen and progesterone will fluctuate.

It is the lower levels of these hormones will give us the opportunity to literally **re-wire** our brain and give rise to what is called our “Second Spring”.

# Types of Estrogen produced outside of our bodies

There are 3 main sources of estrogens outside our bodies:

Plants: Phytoestrogens

The Environment: Xenoestrogens

Synthetic production: HRT, contraceptives

# Phytoestrogens

...sometimes called “dietary estrogens”

They come from plants and botanicals that have an estrogen-like effect on your body.

Some plants that contain phytoestrogens are:

- ❑ soy beans,
- ❑ red clover,
- ❑ beans,
- ❑ cereal brans and
- ❑ flaxseeds.

The effects of these plant estrogens are quite a bit weaker than estrogen produced by your ovaries. In alternative medicine, products that contain phytoestrogens may be also used to treat menopausal symptoms.

## Xenoestrogens

**Xeno = foreign, + Estrogen= “foreign estrogens”.**

Xenoestrogens have been introduced into the environment by industrial, agricultural and chemical companies and consumers only in the last 70 years or so.

They are concentrated endocrine disrupting chemicals, which are found in our food, soil and air.

Xenoestrogens are capable of mimicking our body's estrogen hormone, attaching to estrogen receptors in our bodies.



These products **are not** biodegradable and remain in our environment for long periods of time.

Animals have been suffering reproductive problems for years, and problems are the worst in areas where pollution is the highest.

## Known Xenoestrogens

- ✓ Dioxins,
- ✓ PCB's (polychlorinated biphenyls), and
- ✓ DDT (dichlordophenyltrichloroethane),
- ✓ All chlorinated products,
- ✓ Chemicals present in pesticides and fertilizers,
- ✓ Plastics,
- ✓ Electrical equipment,
- ✓ Waste incineration,
- ✓ Bleach and cleaning solutions



# A word on Organochlorides

**Organochlorines**, a family of organic chemicals are used throughout the world as insecticides, such as

- DDT
- Industrial chemicals like PCB's and found in PVC and
- Spermicidal contraceptives and lubricants.

Organichlorines do not break down once they are released into the environment and eventually make their way up the food chain to be found in both human and animal fats; they are extremely toxic and potentially carcinogenic.

Organichlorines are also estrogen mimickers, attaching to estrogen receptors in the body; they are implicated in

- endometriosis,
- estrogen dependent health disorders,
- lowered sperm counts,
- ovarian failure
- and affect the function of the liver. Liver damage can also increase estrogen levels by inhibiting excess hormones from being eliminated from the body.

## WAYS TO DECREASE THE IMPACT OF ENVIRONMENTAL ESTROGENS, ON YOUR HEALTH:

- Whenever possible store leftovers in glass or ceramic containers instead of plastic.
- Avoid the use of the microwave to reheat food and especially do not microwave foods after being stored in Tupperware or covered with saran wrap, instead reheat in a pot on the stove.
- Choose biodegradable cleaning and laundry detergents or pick up a book on making your own non-toxic cleaning products at home.
- Do not use products containing chlorine bleach in cleaning.
- Avoid the use of fabric softeners, which place petrochemicals directly in contact with the skin.



## WAYS TO DECREASE THE IMPACT OF ENVIRONMENTAL ESTROGENS, ON YOUR HEALTH:

- Buy hormone free/ non-medicated meats or wild game (which is not treated with chemicals or antibiotics). Avoid eating farmed fish.
- Purchase "organic" locally grown produce, free from pesticides, herbicides, chemical sprays or synthetic fertilizers or soak produce in a biodegradable vegetable wash for 10-15 minutes before consuming which may remove small amounts of chemicals from the produce.
- Educate yourself about forms of natural pest control; remove all pesticides, herbicides, fungicides from your home, including insect repellants and weed killers for the lawn.
- Select unbleached recycled paper to use at the office or in your home.
- Purchase unbleached tampons and menstrual pads made with organic cotton and ensure they are free from surfactants, rayon and fragrance. (The FDA detected dioxins and dozens of other substances in conventional tampons).



## WAYS TO DECREASE THE IMPACT OF ENVIRONMENTAL ESTROGENS, ON YOUR HEALTH:

- Avoid condoms that contain the spermicide **nonoxyl-9** that breaks down into nonylphenol, a xenoestrogen.
- Avoid drinking tap water containing chlorine and other chemicals. Instead drink reverse osmosis bottled water. Consider investing in a filter for the shower to remove the chlorine, which is readily absorbed through the skin.
- Don't let your child chew on plastic toys.
- Choose non-bleached paper products including: coffee filters, paper, napkins and toilet tissue. The EPA has determined that using bleached coffee filters alone can result in a lifetime exposure to dioxins that exceed acceptable risks.



# Are we Panicking???





Let's start all over.....

What are Uterine  
Fibroids?

# What are Uterine Fibroids?

- Uterine fibroids, are benign (not cancer) growths in the uterus.

According to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) Fibroids are a form of stagnation (Qi, Blood, Phlegm...).

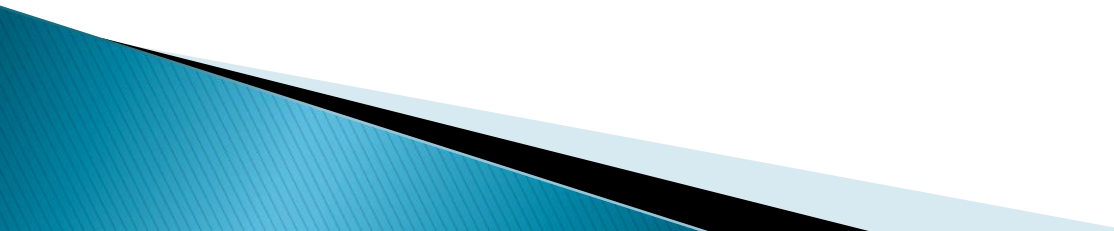
And guess what?

The fat and connective tissue that form a fibroid do so only when the energy flow around and through our uterus is already blocked in some way...

# Qi stagnation

- ▶ When we obsess, for example, we tie up energy (Chi) in a negative process that diverts it from the cells; our life-energy (CHI) leaks away from our bodies. We may leak energy for example, in any situation in which we deny our emotions, thus allowing them to run our lives.

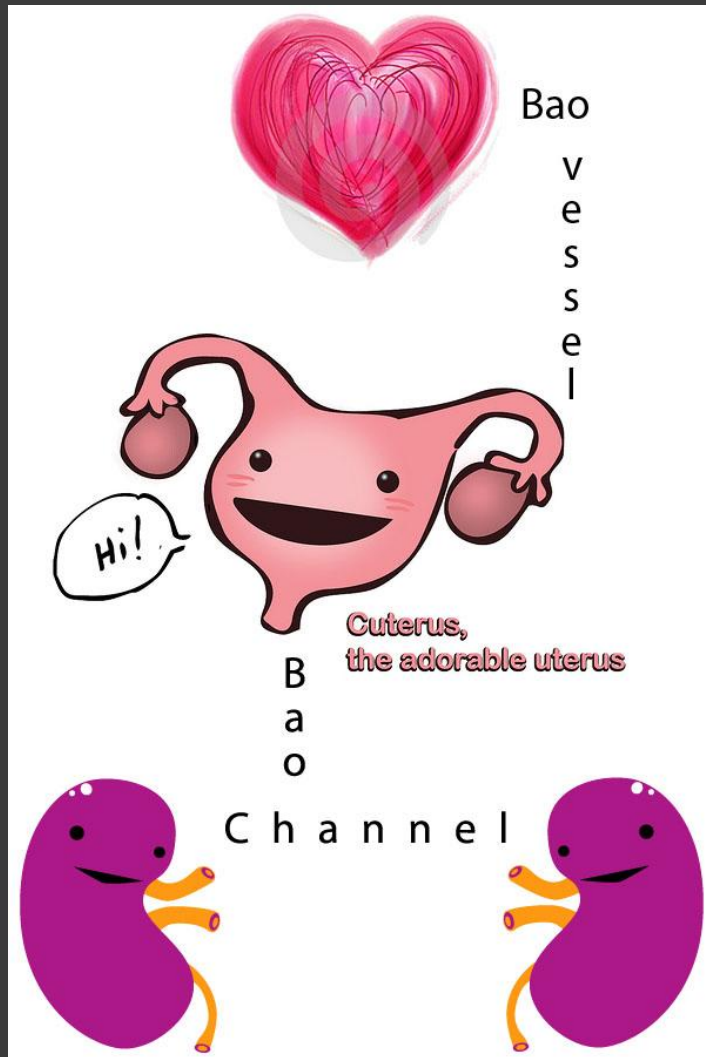
Bodily symptoms is the excuse the body has to bring attention to the areas that need healing



# Flowing Qi vs Stagnant Qi



# What happens when Qi flows unimpeded?



- Traditional Chinese medicine describes a vessel called Bao (Uterus). It runs from the Heart to the Uterus.

There is also a channel called Bao Channel that runs from the Kidney to the Uterus.

When Qi flows unimpeded, the portals of the Heart and the Uterus are open to each other.



# Heart-Uterus-Kidney axis



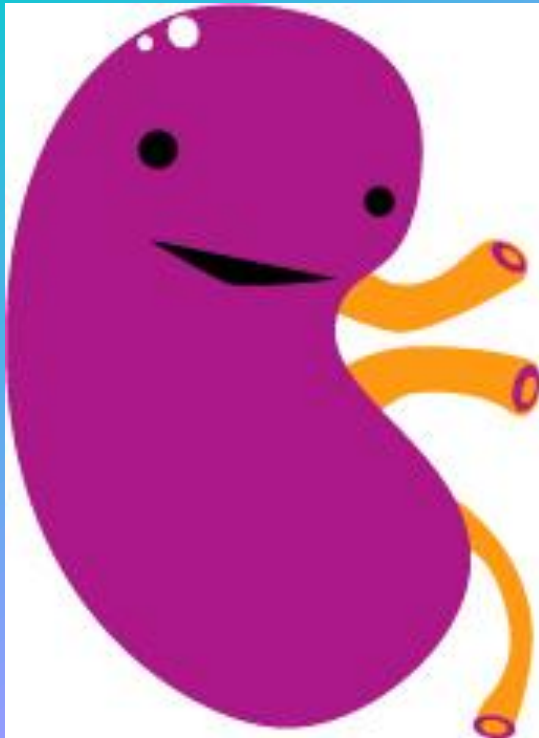
TCM describes all the aspects of female reproduction –the organs, the glands and their secretions, and the psyche- in terms of **Kidney** function, **Heart** function and the **Uterus**

# The Heart in Chinese Medicine

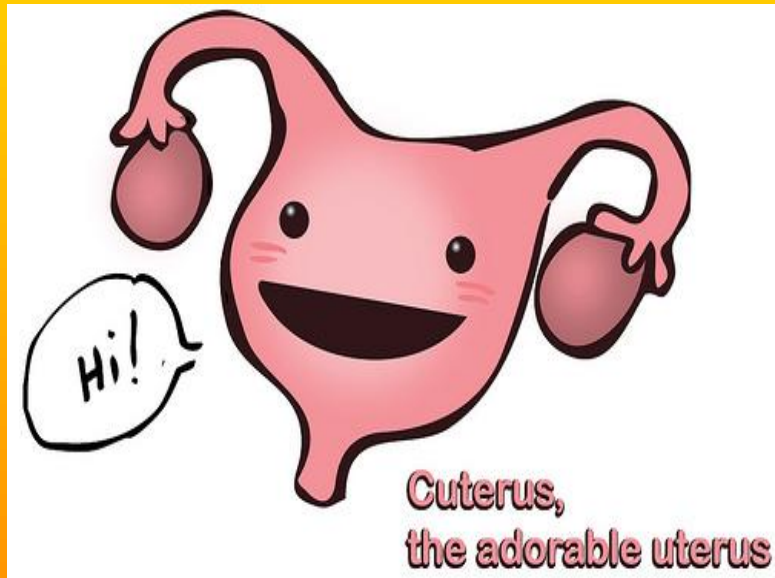


The Heart encompasses the mental activity, the emotions and the functions of the Hypothalamus and Pituitary glands which in Western Medicine are the Master Glands that control our hormonal dance.

# The Kidneys in Chinese Medicine



The Kidneys represent the genetic code inherited from our parents; it's the "*stuff*" we come with. Kidneys are related to the production of gametes, eggs and sperm themselves. The Kidneys, represented by the element Water, are our source of Wisdom



The Uterus, is the arena where **Water and Fire** meet, the potential for life, be that of a human being, a project a new point of view...just about anything that a woman chooses to give birth to.



When the Heart (our emotions, our mental activity) is aligned with the Kidneys (our Essence), Qi flows unimpeded and we can bring life and healing into our wombs!





# How does Qi flow in our abdominal cavity?



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# Energy Anatomy

- Women's bodies naturally have deeper and stronger connections to the Earth's energy.

This energy is a drawing-in type of energy, which takes in or gathers the natural energy of the Earth to our energy center or Dan Tien, located 3 finger breath below the navel.

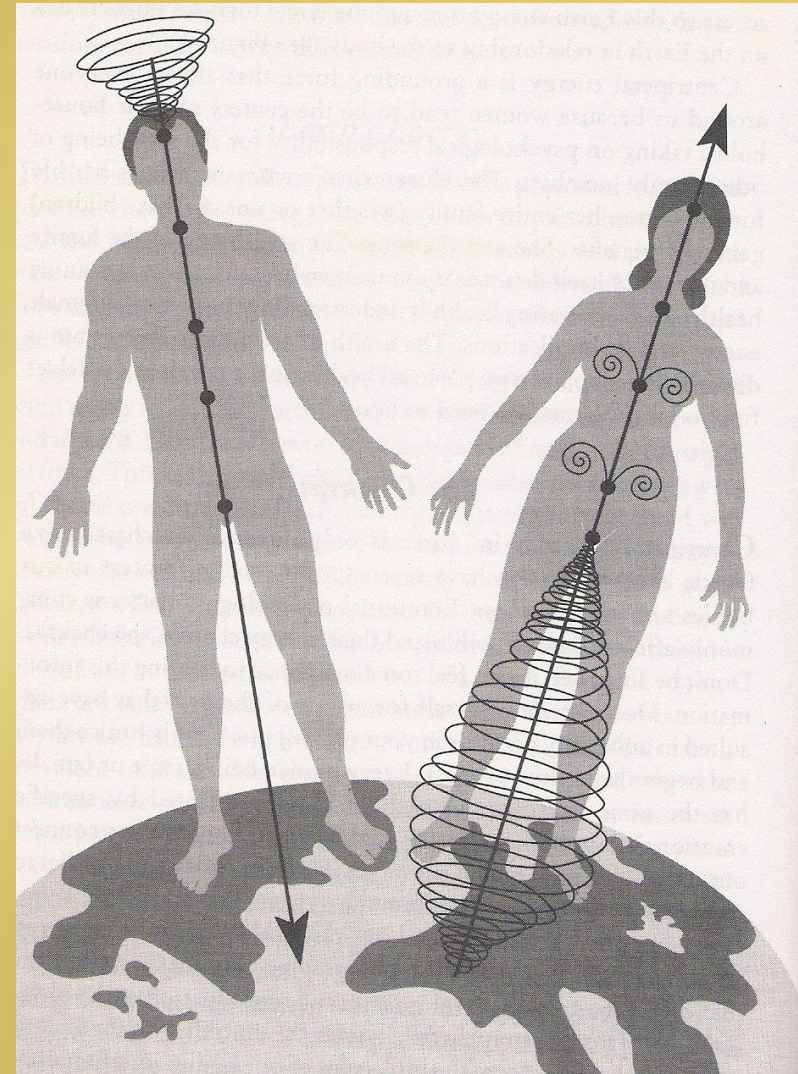
A woman's inward pulling energy is at work when she

- ✓ Puts the baby to the breast,
- ✓ Accepts the penis into the vagina (if she is heterosexual) and
- ✓ Sends chemical signals to encourage sperm to swim toward the egg.

# Earth's Centripetal Energy

Our women's bodies are different from men's in that the Earth's energy moves up through our bodies and inward. We call this "centripetal energy" or drawing in energy. Earth's centripetal force comes up through the feet and is present in men as well as women, just as **Heaven's Force**, coming downward from the sky through the head and the body (centrifugal force) is present in women as well as men. What differs is the *degree* to which each energy is present. In women, in general, more Earth's energy is moving up, or centripetal force is present.

Centripetal energy is a grounding force. Can you recognize it in yourself?



Adapted from Michio Kushi

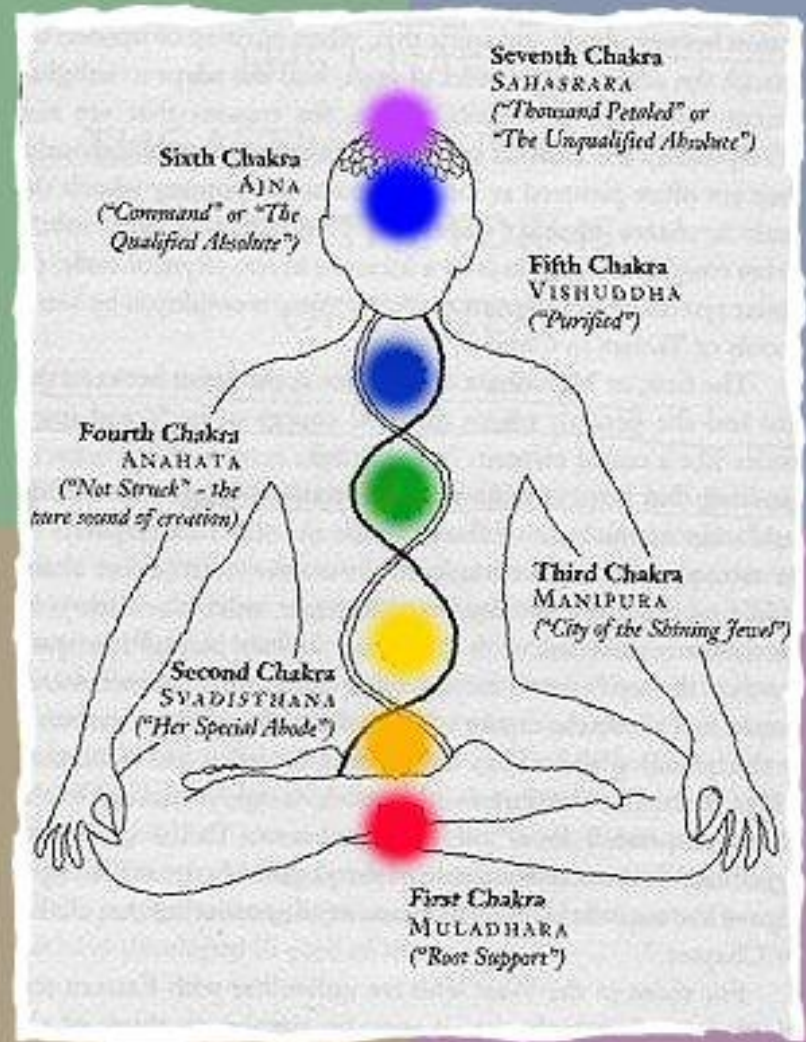


# Chakra system

Think of **chakras** like energy wheels that mediate between the emotional and the physical bodies.

We possess seven main Chakras, which all stand in relationship to each other. The chakras start at the basis of the spinal column and end in the midst of the head vertex.

Each of the seven chakras is associated with specific organ systems and specific emotional states.



This chakra is concerned with

- Our day -to -day physical aspects of living,
- The people to whom we relate and,
- The quality of our relationships, be those with others, with the material world, such as money, and with ourselves.

In oriental thought, the belly is a reservoir of *chi*, a creator of chi at the **Lower Dan Tien**, or **Second Chakra** point, 2 inches below the belly button and 2 inches inside."

- Our **Second** Chakra



# What happens when Qi stagnates?

- The task of the Chakras is mainly to take in fine-fabric oscillations from outside and to convert them into energies within the physical body. These energies are life energies that are distributed in our body into different directions by means of energy paths, so-called **meridians**.
- The flow of the life energy depends on the relationship between the single Chakras and the respective state of a Chakra. If there are blockages in the energy flow, then **the life energy cannot flow** unhindered from Chakra to Chakra and through the meridians.

# What may interrupt the healthy flow of Qi in our abdomen?

The baseline energetic patterns that result in fibroids are related to **blockage and stagnation** of the energy of the second emotional center.

Caroline Myss, Ph.D., teaches that fibroid tumors represent our **creativity that has never been birthed**. Fibroids may also result when we are flowing life energy into dead end jobs or relationships we have outgrown.

Many women can correlate the onset of their fibroids with the onset of verbal abuse from their mates, job stress, or other problems in their relationships with the outside world.

Fibroids are often associated with challenges about **creativity, reproduction, and relationships**.



# Some questions to reflect upon....

- What are the creations within me that I want to put out in the world before I'm no longer here?
- If anything at all were possible, what would my life look like?
- What relationships do I feel are somewhat toxic in your life?
- What relationships do I feel you need to give more of my time and attention to?
- What relationships truly feed and nourish me?  
Which ones drain my energy?



# Healing Alternatives

# Wait and Watch approach

The first thing to consider is that a fibroid may not need to be treated. A **watch-and-wait** attitude is not unreasonable in many cases; you can live with fibroids for years with no adverse health consequences if they are not bothering you. Remember that falling estrogen levels that come in late perimenopause and menopause often shrink fibroids considerably.

There are times, however, when you may wish to seek treatment for a fibroid. You may not want to live with a growth that makes you look pregnant, or you may want to take action if your symptoms include **pain, heavy bleeding, cramping, or backache.**

# Hormonal approach

Another way of treating fibroids is through hormones.

Hormonal treatments may include **bioidentical progesterone** which can smooth out the estrogen dominance that so often causes fibroids to grow or become symptomatic.

You can use a **2% progesterone** cream:  $\frac{1}{4}$  to one half spoon once or twice a day during the 2 to 3 weeks before the period, to block the effects of overproduction of estrogens. If you have irregular or no periods, you may attune with the phases of the moon. In this case, you may want to plan to be off progesterone during the New (dark) Moon.

Some brands that I suggest: Emerita, PhytoGest.



# Types of Surgery

- **Endometrial ablation**: causes destruction of the uterine lining by heat, laser, or other techniques. It results in the cessation of menstruation and infertility.
- **Myomectomy** is a surgical procedure in which fibroid tumors are removed, but the uterus is repaired and left in place.
- Small fibroids can be removed through **laparoscopic surgery** or sometimes by surgical removal through the vagina (**hysteroscopy surgery**).
- Larger ones may require more extensive **abdominal surgery** or **uterine artery embolization**, which is a procedure that blocks blood flow to the fibroids and causes them to shrink.

# Types of Surgery

➤ **ExAblate** is a new treatment that combines MRI imaging to map out uterine fibroids followed by high-intensity, focused ultrasound that heats up and destroys fibroid tissue. The procedure is noninvasive and leaves the uterus and ovaries intact.

Side effects may include blisters on the abdominal skin, cramping, nausea, and some pain that can be managed with acupuncture and herbal medicine.

Studies show that ExAblate successfully reduces fibroid symptoms in about 70 percent of women, but that 20 percent will require additional surgery within a year.

**Note:** Do not use ExAblate if you want to get pregnant because not enough data is available to determine what happens to the uterine wall and lining following the procedure.

# Hysterectomy

Hysterectomy is probably the option most commonly offered to American women who have fibroids, but one which deserves very careful consideration.

**Hysterectomy should be the last resort**, reserved for those women who, in addition to their fibroids, also have intractable bleeding or pain problems that simply have not responded to other measures. When this is the case, hysterectomy can be a real blessing, dramatically enhancing the quality of a woman's life.

# Alternative Medicine

Alternative approaches to surgery and drugs have shown to work really well for fibroids as well as for heavy bleeding or menstrual cramps. These approaches will help you balance excess estrogen and they will enhance the flow of Qi through the pelvis as well.

- Dietary Changes
- Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine
- Qi Gong and aerobic exercise
- Castor Oil packs



# Dietary adjustments

Since the uterus is estrogen–sensitive, any dietary approach that counteracts estrogen dominance often works for fibroids.

Organic fruits and vegetables, if available and affordable are always the best choice.

I usually recommend a diet centered on:

- Whole foods,
- Fresh fruits and vegetables,
- Nuts and seeds,
- Whole grains
- Good quality proteins and healthy fats.



# How about Sugar and Coffee?

Eating a diet **low** in high-glycemic carbohydrates such as **sugar and starch** can help. "White" foods like sugar and starch increase insulin, which changes the way estrogen is metabolized, creating compounds that are more likely to cause cellular inflammation and fibroid symptoms, including enhanced growth of existing fibroids.

Foods thought best to be **avoided**, either because of their low-fiber content or their history of promoting fibroid growth, include:

- Dairy products,
- Red meat,
- Fried fatty foods,
- Sugar,
- Salt,
- Caffeine, and
- Alcohol.

# Anti-Estrogenic Foods

**Lignins**, found in all whole grains, are antiestrogenic. Lignins are present in decreasing order in

- flaxseed,
- rye,
- buckwheat,
- millet,
- oats,
- barley,
- corn, and
- brown rice.

**Fiber-rich diets** can assist in extracting excessive estrogen stores from the body. The positive effects of a high-fiber diet compared to a low-fiber diet (28 grams daily compared to 12 grams) were illustrated when fecal weight and fecal excretion of estrogens in the vegetarian's diet were contrasted to that of nonvegetarian (eating both animal and vegetable substances) (Goldin et al. 1982).

# Phytoestrogens

## How can they help to decrease estrogen levels?

Phytoestrogen-rich foods decrease the effects of estrogen levels naturally by blocking the estrogen receptors on the cells in fibroids and other estrogen-sensitive tissues. Studies have shown that eating soy and flax helps the body produce smaller amounts of unhealthy estrogens. Flaxseed is high in both fiber and omega-3 fats, which help reduce inflammation and tumor growth throughout the body and rid the body of toxins, including excess estrogen.



# Qi Gong

- Qigong as an ancient Chinese health care system helps to reduce stress. Lower levels of stress means that your Qi may move more freely in your pelvis which in turn will help remove stagnation.

Qigong teaches psycho-physiological self-regulation that will help you experience a healthier balance.

This Energy Cultivation involves the meridian system as used in acupuncture and it emphasizes the importance of adding mind intent and breathing techniques to physical movements. When these dimensions are added, the benefits of the practice increase exponentially.

## SUMMARY: WHAT CAN HELP HEAL MY FIBROIDS?

- Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine
- Dietary adjustments
- Progesterone cream
- Qi Gong, meditation
- Aerobic exercise
- Surgery
- Listening to the messages that our uterus is voicing through the fibroids

There can be a combination of one or more of these therapies.



# A true Gift...

- The Uterus is energetically related to our innermost sense of self and our inner world. It is symbolic of our dreams and all that we want and need to give birth to....

Let's honor our wombs by listening to its messages!!!