Ovarian cysts

Dear Alice,

What are ovarian cysts? What do they feel like, and where would one feel the symptoms?

?Bumpy

Answer

Dear Bumpy,

An ovarian cyst is an abnormal swelling in the ovary. It can either be fluid-filled or a solid benign (non dangerous) tumor. Cysts are quite common, and about 95 percent of them are benign. Most disappear with no treatment at all. Many women develop cysts at specific times in their menstrual cycle, that come and go each month.

Symptoms of cysts may include irregular menstrual cycles, abdominal swelling, or pain during intercourse. Small, unobtrusive cysts may cause no symptoms at all, and may only be located during routine pelvic exams. If a cyst does not disappear within two menstrual cycles and your provider is concerned, s/he might use ultrasound scanning, or laparoscopy (method of examination using an endoscope or type of viewing tube) to look at the cyst more closely, determine its size and position, and a correct diagnosis. Benign cysts can sometimes be treated with alternative therapies, such as hormone therapy, stress reduction techniques, acupuncture, dietary modifications and/or herbal remedies. Other cysts may have to be removed surgically if they are causing you undue discomfort or if they are interfering with normal ovarian and reproductive functioning.

Cysts are quite common among women. If you have been diagnosed with ovarian cysts, it is important for you to discuss it with your provider. S/he can tell you whether your cysts are cause for worry or nothing to be concerned about. If you are a Columbia student, you can make an appointment with Medical Services online through Open Communicator, or by calling x4-2284.

Alice!

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