



## "I HAD FOUR FIBROIDS – TWO WERE BIGGER THAN A CRICKET BALL"



*Ginette Camps-Walsh, 45, a medical marketing consultant from Oxford, has suffered from fibroids for two years. She underwent an embolisation procedure to help alleviate her symptoms.*

"Two years ago I was feeling increasingly uncomfortable sitting down and experiencing very painful periods, which lasted for 12 days. I'd also put on a lot of weight quickly. My GP referred me for an MRI scan, which showed I had four fibroids – two of them were bigger than a cricket ball. I was given two options – prescribed drugs to induce an early menopause, or a hysterectomy. Both sounded drastic, so I did some research and opted for a uterine embolisation. The procedure was a complete success and I now have only one small fibroid left and my uterus has returned to a normal size. I've started exercising again, my periods are hardly noticeable, there's no reduction in my libido and I look younger and slimmer!"

cancer," explains Jacqui Jedrzejewski, regional nursing director at NHS Direct. "It is therefore essential for *all* women to have regular cervical screening. Routine screening is offered every three years, from the age of 25 years up to the age of 64."

No matter what your age, if you are sexually active and have a new partner or multiple partners, experts recommend annual testing for STDs.

• Visit [immunisation.nhs.uk/vaccines/hpv](http://immunisation.nhs.uk/vaccines/hpv) or call 0845 602 3303 for more information.

## FIBROIDS AND POLYPS

**WHAT ARE THEY?** Uterine fibroids are benign (non-cancerous) tumours of the smooth muscle of the uterus or womb and are the most common tumours found in the female genital tract. Fibroid growth increases with age and is fairly normal. Polyps are benign growths of the mucus membrane of the uterus. They tend to affect women aged 40 and over, with the average age for treatment being mid-40s. **SYMPTOMS:** According to Dr Nigel Cowan of the Churchill Hospital in Oxford, most women don't even know that they have fibroids. Only 20 per cent experience related symptoms, such as ▷

potentially lead to pelvic inflammatory disease and result in infertility.

### CHLAMYDIA

**WHAT IS IT?** Genital chlamydia is the most common STD in the UK and is caused by the bacteria *Chlamydia trachomatis*. **SYMPTOMS:** Typically, it's symptom-free, although it can result in painful urination and an abnormal vaginal discharge.

**TREATMENT:** A urine sample or cervical swab, taken by your GP, will determine if you have been infected. If the test is positive, chlamydia can be easily treated with a course of antibiotics.

• Visit [fpa.org.uk](http://fpa.org.uk) or contact the FPA on 0845 122 8690 for more information.

### HPV

**WHAT IS IT?** The human papilloma virus (HPV) is a viral infection that can spread through genital contact. About 75 per cent of people will get HPV at some

point in their lifetime, according to Cancer Research, and there are more than 100 different strains of the virus. In most cases, your body's immune system will deal with the infection and you may never even know that you've had it.

**SYMPTOMS:** Most HPV cases are symptom-free except for mild vaginal itching. Certain strains can cause genital or non-genital warts, and some HPV strains have been linked with cervical cancer.

**TREATMENT:** Your GP can detect HPV with a cervical smear, so be sure to have one regularly. If it's positive, you'll need to be monitored again for precancerous cervical cells. A routine HPV vaccination programme for girls aged 12-13 was introduced by the Department of Health in September 2008, as it is best administered before the onset of sexual activity. "The vaccination protects against 70 per cent of cancer-causing HPV types, but does not protect against cervical