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which increased from light to slightly heavier over the next year. It may take up to a year for periods to settle down after the treatment. One woman said she felt much more energetic once her fibroid had been treated, another reported that she felt like a new woman.

Some women have asked when they can start to use tampons again and when they may resume sex after embolisation. As soon as periods have gone back to normal and there is no discharge, it is possible to use tampons. You can resume sex when you feel ready.

Over the months following the treatment all the women in our group noticed a reduction in the size of their fibroids - mostly by about 50%. Some have a greater reduction. This resulted in much ease of discomfort, pressure symptoms, incontinence, back pain, etc. A few of us have undergone embolisation more than once - in such cases benefit is less evident until the treatment is complete.

Most of us felt relieved and glad to have had our fibroids dealt with, but a few had ambivalent feelings about what had been done to their bodies. These feelings were dispelled as the benefits of the embolisation became apparent. Please contact our patient support group, if this applies to you.

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In the longer term ...

a few women found that their periods stopped or that they had a very heavy, continuous discharge. These symptoms can occur up to 18 months after the procedure. If this happens to you, you should get back in touch with your Consultant Radiologist.

The members of FEmISA who have drafted this leaflet feel overwhelming relief that we have not had to go through the ordeal of having a hysterectomy. We have found Fibroid Embolisation to be a much less invasive procedure and we are all delighted with the results.

Patient Support

You will find a lot more helpful information on our website:

<http://www.femisa.org.uk>

If you would like support or further information please contact us on:

help@femisa.org.uk



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Information for patients who have just had embolisation treatment.

This information has been collected by a group of women who have undergone fibroid embolisation treatment at The Churchill Hospital, Oxford. We want to share our experience with others because we are aware that little information is available about this treatment that is written by patients for patients.

The information in this leaflet is not medical advice, it is based on our own experiences. Please contact your Consultant Radiologist, Gynaecologist or GP for medical queries.

What did we experience after the embolisation procedure?

Most of us experienced pain (resembling period cramp or labour pain) almost immediately after the treatment was completed. If needed, strong painkillers are administered at this stage. Some of us suffered pain in spite of the painkillers. The main side effect of the painkillers that many of us experienced was nausea for 24 - 36 hours.

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One woman in our group reported no nausea and almost no pain: maybe you will be lucky too!!

One has to lie still for about 6 hours after embolisation, to make sure that the very small wound from the catheter heals up. Some of us found this hard, as moving around can help with cramps. Most experienced an uncomfortable night, needing painkillers periodically. Some found that it helped to be able to walk about, once we were allowed to. In the morning, intravenous painkillers are usually replaced by tablets, and this helps to get over nausea and restore appetite. By this time, most women feel much better.

What happens the day after the embolisation?

It is usual to return home the day after embolisation. Most of us were still feeling rather fragile, but well enough to go home with a supply of anti-inflammatory and other painkillers. A few of us were in hospital for a few days. For most women the recovery period is from one or two days to about one month, although some of us did not feel completely back to normal for 3 months. A three or four week break from work is recommended and, for some of us, this meant that the last couple of weeks were a bit of a holiday, while others returned to

work still experiencing some pain or feeling very tired.

We found that being well supported by partners and friends after treatment was very important. Most of us spent the best part of the first week in bed or resting. Even if you have a very supportive partner, your women friends may be very important to you at this time.

Symptoms that you may experience during the recovery period (most women only suffered from one or two of the symptoms listed below):

- ◆ Allergy to painkillers (resulting in more pain and nausea than normal). If you tend to be allergic to certain drugs, tell the nursing team before you have the procedure done
- ◆ Night sweats
- ◆ Temperature
- ◆ Vaginal discharge. If this has an offensive smell, it could be a sign of infection - **you must contact your Consultant Radiologist**
- ◆ Some women discharge their fibroids over the next few months. This may cause problems if the fibroids get stuck in the uterus or vagina. **If this happens contact your Consultant Radiologist immediately**
- ◆ If you run a high temperature (over 38.5° C) **you must contact your Consultant**

immediately, this could be a sign of infection

- ◆ Prolonged, 'crampy' or heavy periods
- ◆ Exhaustion and low energy levels
- ◆ Skin eruptions
- ◆ Feeling bloated or tender abdomen (take comfortable, loose fitting clothes with you to hospital to wear after the procedure)
- ◆ Constipation or difficulty urinating
- ◆ Low appetite
- ◆ Pain in upper legs
- ◆ Bruising on leg or around the small catheter wound.

A few women suffer from infections after the embolisation procedure. If this happens to you, it is important that you seek help STRAIGHT AWAY.

You should contact your Consultant Radiologist, especially in case of increasing pelvic pain, fever (greater than 38.5°C), vaginal discharge of pus, heavy bleeding or expulsion of fibroid debris.

What can I expect after recovery?

Several women reported that their periods went back to normal, a state some of them hadn't experienced since their school days! Others reported very long (up to eight weeks) periods for the first few months after the treatment, or periods