

Management of Asymptomatic Adnexal Cysts

The following recommendations were made by a panel of specialists from gynecology, radiology and pathology with subspecialty interests in gynecologic ultrasound (US), general gynecology, gynecologic oncology, reproductive endocrinology, menopause, gynecologic pathology and epidemiology gathered by the Society of Radiologists in Ultrasound.

Subsequently the ANMC Departments of Radiology and Obstetrics and Gynecology agreed to manage asymptomatic adnexal cysts in the following manner.

Definitions/Concepts:

1. Cyst size is determined by maximal single diameter not the average diameter.
2. Perimenopause is a continuum typically occurring at 51 to 53 years of age but as early as 40 and as late as 60 years of age.
3. Postmenopause: one year or more of amenorrhea from the last menstrual period.
 - a. Early or stage I: one to five years
 - b. Late or stage II: >five years; rare ovulation but may have simple cysts up to 1 cm
4. Average size of dominant follicle at ovulation is 2 – 2.4 cm with range of 1.7 -2.8 cm. Therefore, simple cysts are considered to be physiologic when <3cm.
5. Simple ovarian cysts:
 - a. Up to 10 cm in any patient has a <1% malignancy rate.
 - b. Up to 84% of surgically removed enlarged ovarian cysts are serous cystadenomas which have so low a rate of malignant transformation as to not warrant close follow up (f/u).
 - c. Simple cysts >10 cm have a 13% incidence of malignancy.
6. Paratubal and paraovarian simple cysts are treated the same as simple ovarian cysts.
7. Ultrasound findings that should raise the clinician's level of concern regarding malignancy include cyst size greater than 10 cm, papillary or solid components, irregularity, presence of ascites, and high color Doppler flow.

Suspicious characteristics:

Multiple thin (<3 mm thick) septations, wall thickening up <3 mm or peripheral nodule without vascular flow by any US method (color, duplex or arterial Doppler) in the reproductive age female should be followed at 6-12 weeks; best at day 3-10 of the menstrual cycle.

Malignant characteristics:

1. Thick septations (≥ 3 mm)
2. Wall thickening ≥ 3 mm
3. Intracystic nodule with internal vascular flow has the highest likelihood of malignancy

4. Additional secondary signs;
 - a. Pelvic ascites
 - b. Peritoneal masses/studding

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Simple Cysts:

Reproductive age:

1. ≤ 3 cm: may or may not be reported in US report; f/u not warranted
2. >3 & ≤ 5 cm: described almost certainly benign in imaging report; f/u not warranted
3. >5 & ≤ 7 cm: described almost certainly benign in imaging report; f/u at yearly intervals
4. >7 cm: Magnetic resonance (MR) and GYN surgical evaluation since cyst wall may be incompletely evaluated at US

Postmenopausal:

1. ≤ 1 cm: may or may not be described in US report; f/u not warranted
2. >1 cm and ≤ 7 cm: Refer for GYN evaluation
3. >7 cm: MR and refer for GYN evaluation

Cochrane Database

Although widely used for treating functional premenopausal ovarian cysts, combined oral contraceptives appear to be of no benefit. Watchful waiting for two or three menstrual cycles is appropriate. Should cysts persist, GYN surgical management is often indicated.

Hemorrhagic Cysts: Typically resolve in 8 weeks

Reproductive age:

1. ≤ 3 cm: may or may not describe in US report; f/u not warranted
2. >3 & ≤ 5 cm: described in US report; f/u not warranted
3. >5 cm: described in US report; f/u in 6-12 weeks, preferably during day 3-10 of menstrual cycle

Postmenopausal:

1. Refer for GYN evaluation

Endometrioma:

Reproductive age:

1. Initial f/u at 6-12 weeks to confirm it is not a hemorrhagic cyst then yearly if not removed
 - a. 1% malignant transformation, usually in women >45 years old and in endometrioma >6 cm and almost always >10 cm. 4.5-year average latency period to development of cancer
2. GYN consult

Postmenopausal:

1. Refer for GYN evaluation

Dermoid:

Reproductive age:

1. Followed at 6 months then yearly if not removed.
 - a. 0.17 – 2.0% malignant transformation, usually in women >50 years old, typically in masses >10 cm but as small as 3 cm. Average latency period for development of cancer is 15-20 years.
2. GYN consult

Postmenopausal:

1. Refer for GYN evaluation

Hydrosalpinx:

1. Follow up as clinically warranted

Peritoneal Inclusion Cyst:

1. Follow up as clinically warranted

References:

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-Grimes DA, Jones LB, Lopez LM, Schulz KF. Oral contraceptives for functional ovarian cysts. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2014, Issue 4. Art. No.: CD006134. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD006134.pub5. (Accessed 11/20/22)

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