

Surgery on ovarian cysts often not needed because most are harmless

◆ Common ovarian cysts do not need to be removed, scientists have said, after a study found the vast majority resolve or disappear on their own.

Ovarian cysts are fluid-filled sacs that develop on a woman's ovary, causing few symptoms other than bloating and occasionally pelvic pain.

Doctors refer patients with these symptoms for ultrasound scans, where the cysts are classified as benign or cancerous – with cysts always removed if cancer is suspected.

But when cysts are found to be benign, women are still often recommended to have them removed surgically. This is because it has been thought that there is a risk of serious complications such as the cyst bursting, or causing ovaries to twist.

The new research, by Imperial College London and published in *The Lancet Oncology*, followed nearly 2,000 women as they were scanned in the years after a benign cyst diagnosis.

Overall, in 80 per cent of cases the cyst resolved or did not need intervention. In total, 12 women went on to be diagnosed with ovarian cancer – suggesting a risk of 0.4 per cent – but researchers said this may have been because the tumours were originally wrongly misdiagnosed.

The rate of other complications, such as ovarian twisting or cyst rupture was 0.4 per cent and 0.2 per cent respectively.

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