

Healthy You

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at Lehigh Valley Hospital



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 **Lehigh Valley
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A woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a black swimsuit, is swimming in a pool. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. The water is a clear, light blue color. The background shows the pool's edge and some reflections on the water surface.

Relieving Fibroid Pain

Robotic surgery helps Kim Somori

Kimberly Somori (above) went to do a good deed—donate blood—when she got some surprising news. The 50-year-old Hamburg woman was declined due to anemia, which meant her red blood cell count was less than normal.

It was one of many concerning symptoms. “I also had very heavy, painful periods,” she says. “And I was tired all the time.” After seeking medical help, Somori learned she had fibroids, noncancerous growths in the uterus.

Fibroids are common, and many women don’t even know they have them. “Approximately 20 to 25 percent of women have fibroids,” says obstetrician/gynecologist Patrick McIntyre, MD, with Lehigh Valley Health Network. Fibroids are most often identified in women in their 20s, 30s and 40s.

There is no known cause, but estrogen and progesterone tend to make fibroids grow larger, which is why they’re typically found in women in their reproductive years. Fibroids usually are less of a problem after menopause. “Fibroids grow in response to ovarian hormones,” McIntyre says. “They generally become inactive and may get smaller during menopause.”

Fibroids often don’t cause symptoms, and many women don’t need to remove them because they don’t cause pain. But for some women like Somori, fibroids cause symptoms such as heavy bleeding during their period and pelvic pain or pressure.

To control her symptoms, Somori first underwent endometrial ablation, a procedure that reduces or stops menstrual bleeding by attempting to destroy the lining of the uterus. She felt better at first, but her symptoms returned a year later. After she was referred to McIntyre, Somori began exploring another option—hysterectomy, the removal of the uterus.

To prepare for surgery, Somori took medication that improved her anemia and shrank her fibroids. “That allowed us to perform her hysterectomy with minimally invasive surgery,” McIntyre says.

McIntyre used the da Vinci® robotic surgical system, which allowed Somori to have her fibroids removed with less pain and a quicker recovery time. It also helped because Somori has type 1 diabetes. “The smaller incisions help because people with diabetes have a greater potential for poor wound healing,” McIntyre says.

Somori returned home from the hospital just one day after her hysterectomy last December. Today she’s living pain-free, working as a labor and delivery nurse at Lehigh Valley Health Network and enjoying life again. Her anemia disappeared, and she’s thankful she had the procedure. “I feel wonderful,” she says.

Next Step: *Learn more about robotic surgery. Visit lvhn.org/healthyyou or call 610-402-CARE.*