

What to Do if You Get Diagnosed with an Ovarian Cyst

Analysis by [Dr. Joseph Mercola](#)

August 29, 2026

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Most ovarian cysts are harmless and disappear naturally, but some cause severe complications like rupture or twisting the ovary, requiring emergency surgery
- › Vegetable oils like canola and sunflower act as fake estrogens, damaging ovarian tissue and fueling cyst formation due to linoleic acid content
- › PCOS drives recurring cysts through hormonal chaos, particularly insulin resistance and elevated estrogen that disrupts normal ovarian function and cycles
- › Natural pain relief includes heat therapy, massage, and gentle movement, while chamomile and ginger teas help reduce inflammation and balance hormones
- › Prevention focuses on eliminating vegetable oils, addressing insulin resistance, and considering natural progesterone to restore hormonal balance and stop cyst recurrence

Ovarian cysts are among the most common gynecological findings, yet they often strike without warning. These fluid-filled sacs grow on or inside the ovaries and are typically harmless. But when they rupture, twist the ovary, or grow too large, they trigger sudden, severe pain, disrupt your hormones, and even threaten fertility. In rare cases, they signal ovarian cancer.

Most women don't even know they have a cyst until an ultrasound reveals it. That's a concerning gap in awareness, especially considering the risk of complications. Pain in your lower abdomen, bloating, irregular periods, pain during sex, and changes in

urination or bowel habits are common signs of an ovarian cyst. But depending on its size and type, some women feel nothing at all.

While about two-thirds of cysts disappear on their own, some do not.¹ In some cases, cysts even cut off blood flow, requiring immediate surgery to save the organ. The concern isn't just the cyst, however — it's the conditions that create them. Polycystic ovary syndrome, or PCOS, is one major culprit. Characterized by irregular periods, facial hair, weight gain, and multiple small cysts, PCOS is also linked to infertility and insulin resistance.

Left unmanaged, it opens the door to long-term hormonal chaos. Understanding what kind of cyst you have and what caused it is the key to avoiding unnecessary treatment, managing your symptoms, and preserving your reproductive health. That's where the first set of findings comes in.

Some Cysts Vanish on Their Own, While Others Send You Straight to the ER

Ovarian cysts are not always a cause for alarm, as many are part of a [woman's normal cycle](#). Speaking with TIME, ob-gyn Dr. Mary Jane Minkin of Yale Medicine explains that ovulation itself often produces what's called a "functional cyst."² This happens when a follicle, the small sac that holds your egg, swells up with fluid during the release process. These types of cysts usually dissolve on their own without causing problems.

- **But some cysts don't disappear — and that's when trouble begins —** If a cyst grows too large, ruptures, or causes ovarian torsion (twisting of the ovary), it often becomes a medical emergency. If torsion cuts off blood flow to the ovary, it risks permanent damage. Symptoms like intense pain, nausea, and vomiting are red flags that demand immediate care.

Transvaginal ultrasound remains the gold standard for evaluating ovarian cysts. Radiologists look at shape, size, fluid content, and blood flow. These details help determine whether the growth is benign or needs further attention.

- **Size, content, and structure guide your next steps** — Cysts filled only with fluid and under about 5 centimeters are often left alone. But if they have "solid components" or fingerlike projections, or if they keep growing, doctors often order blood tests such as cancer antigen 125 (CA-125) to check for cancer-related proteins.
- **You may not need surgery even if you're over 50** — One study followed women over 50 who had stable ovarian cysts and found their risk of developing ovarian cancer was just 0.27% over 3.5 years.³ That means many postmenopausal cysts are still safe to monitor rather than remove immediately.
- **Ovarian preservation is part of the strategy** — Even when surgical removal is necessary, doctors try to avoid removing the entire ovary whenever possible. Preserving hormonal function is key to protecting your heart, bones, and brain long-term, especially if you're still menstruating.

Ovarian Cysts Form for Many Reasons — and Not All Cysts Are Harmless

According to the Cleveland Clinic, while most ovarian cysts are classified as "functional" and develop as part of ovulation, other types like dermoid cysts, cystadenomas, and endometriomas don't follow this pattern.⁴ These growths form due to abnormal cell reproduction or **endometriosis** and need more monitoring to ensure they don't lead to complications.

- **Some cysts don't cause symptoms, but others press on organs** — Depending on their size and location, these growths may trigger pain in your back or pelvis, frequent urges to urinate, or even pain during sex. Large cysts often create pressure and discomfort in the lower abdomen, especially if they start pressing against your bladder or bowel.
- **Hormonal disorders raise your odds of getting more cysts** — If you've ever had a cyst before, your chances of getting another are higher. But conditions like endometriosis or **PCOS** significantly raise the risk by disrupting your hormonal

balance. Medications used to stimulate ovulation, like Clomid, also increase cyst formation.

- **Cysts don't always stay small – when they grow, the risks climb** – While many shrink and disappear within a few menstrual cycles, some keep growing. Once a cyst crosses the 10-centimeter mark (nearly 4 inches), doctors often recommend surgical removal. This is especially true if the cyst starts causing pain or shows signs of abnormal structure on ultrasound.
- **Ovarian cysts are rarely cancerous, but some are** – Fewer than 1% of ovarian cysts turn out to be cancer. However, the odds increase if you're postmenopausal. If the cyst is complex or solid in appearance, or if blood tests show high CA-125 levels, your doctor may refer you for a deeper evaluation.
- **Prevention isn't always possible, but tracking your symptoms helps** – Most cysts don't require treatment. But if you feel bloated, notice changes in your period, or have pelvic pain that won't go away, bring it up. Keeping track of symptoms gives your provider better insight into whether you need imaging or follow-up care.

Vegetable Oils Act Like Fake Estrogens and Damage Your Ovaries

In a study published in Environmental Science and Pollution Research, researchers tested common vegetable oils on female rats over a 28-day period and found they harmed ovarian function.⁵ The oils tested included genetically modified (GM) canola, GM maize, and sunflower.

- **Even without affecting basic hormone levels, these oils caused visible ovarian damage** – The study found no major changes in lipid profiles or in the main reproductive hormones, but serum estradiol levels spiked in both the canola and sunflower oil groups.

Estradiol is a form of estrogen, and elevated levels of it are known to fuel cyst formation and disrupt ovarian function. Rats fed these oils developed ovarian atrophy, meaning the ovaries began to shrink and weaken structurally.

- **Sunflower oil caused the most severe ovarian changes** — While all oil-fed rats showed some form of ovarian toxicity, the sunflower group displayed the worst damage. Researchers observed severe congestion of ovarian blood vessels and numerous follicular cysts — fluid-filled sacs that distort normal ovary function. This mirrors the type of cystic development often seen in PCOS and other reproductive disorders.
- **Canola oil triggered similar ovarian degeneration** — The canola group also experienced atrophied ovaries and elevated estradiol levels. Although the structural damage wasn't as extreme as in the sunflower-fed rats, it still indicated hormonal disruption and tissue breakdown. The presence of secondary and simple cysts pointed to interference with the ovulation process and follicular development.
- **PUFs act like xenoestrogens inside the body** — Bioenergetic researcher Georgi Dinkov emphasized that polyunsaturated fats (PUFs) like [linoleic acid](#) (LA), found in these oils, behave like endocrine-disrupting chemicals.⁶

That puts them in the same category as compounds like phthalates, parabens, and bisphenols. These substances mimic estrogen and hijack normal hormone signaling, leading to overstimulation of estrogen receptors in reproductive organs.

Unlike synthetic chemicals, which are increasingly regulated or avoided by health-conscious consumers, PUFs from vegetable oils are still consumed in massive quantities. They're marketed as healthy, yet this study showed they have a direct toxic impact on ovarian structure — without the protections or warnings given to more notorious hormone disruptors.

- **Estrogen overload from dietary oils fuels cyst formation** — The mechanism is clear: elevated estrogen, triggered by LA-rich vegetable oils and other endocrine disruptors, increases the likelihood of abnormal follicle growth and cyst

development. When your ovaries receive repeated, estrogen-like signals from environmental sources, they lose the ability to maintain balanced hormone cycles, setting the stage for dysfunction.

If you're struggling with irregular cycles, ovarian cysts, or PCOS symptoms, eliminating canola, sunflower, and other vegetable oils is a key step. These oils actively interfere with your reproductive health on a cellular level. Awareness and dietary changes give you a powerful way to start reversing the damage.

Natural Therapies Help Ease Symptoms

While most home remedies won't shrink cysts, they do ease your discomfort. At-home strategies like heat therapy and stretching help relieve pressure and reduce pain from ovarian cysts. These are symptom-focused tools, not treatments for the cyst itself. Still, if you're in pain, these methods help you feel more in control and less anxious.

- **Pain relief is more effective when you target tight muscles** — Ovarian cyst pain often leads to muscle tension in your lower back, stomach, or thighs. Massaging these areas reduces the surrounding tightness and improves your comfort.⁷ Other options include warm compresses or alternating heat and ice packs to loosen muscles and improve blood flow, both of which reduce the perception of pain.
- **Movement is medicine, especially if your cysts are linked to PCOS** — A systematic review found that regular exercise, especially when combined with dietary changes, had a stronger impact on PCOS symptom relief than diet alone.⁸ Daily walking is important, and yoga is another good place to start. It reduces stress hormones, increases flexibility, and supports hormonal regulation, all of which help if your cysts are tied to hormonal imbalance.
- **Relaxation techniques go a long way toward managing pain** — Stress amplifies pain, and cyst-related anxiety makes everything feel worse. Gentle exercises like [slow breathing](#), guided meditation, and yoga movements help interrupt pain signals and calm your nervous system.

- **Chamomile and ginger tea help your hormones** — Chamomile helps reduce menstrual cramps and inflammation. It also lowers testosterone levels, which are often elevated in women with PCOS.^{9,10} Ginger supports this process by reducing inflammation and helping balance reproductive hormones.¹¹ These herbal teas help support hormonal recovery at the root level.

How to Support Your Ovaries and Stop Cysts from Coming Back

If you've been diagnosed with an ovarian cyst, or if you're dealing with recurring ones, the next step isn't just managing the pain. You need to focus on the root cause. Whether your cysts are tied to hormone imbalance, diet, or environmental exposures, the goal is to create a body environment where those cysts don't keep forming.

I want to help you take back control by giving you practical, no-nonsense steps that target what's really going on under the surface. To begin rebuilding your hormonal foundation from the inside out, here's where I recommend you start:

- 1. Eliminate vegetable oils from your diet** — Stop eating LA in vegetable oils like canola, sunflower, corn, soybean, and grapeseed oil. These oils are marketed as healthy, but they act like synthetic estrogens inside your body.

They overstimulate your ovaries and fuel cyst development, even causing atrophy and congestion in ovarian tissue. Stop cooking with them. Stop eating processed foods made with them. Swap them out for saturated fats like tallow, ghee, or grass fed butter.

- 2. If you have PCOS, fix the root issue — don't just manage the symptoms** — PCOS is driven by hormonal chaos, especially insulin resistance and excess androgens like testosterone. To start correcting it, you'll need to move your body regularly — walking, stretching, and strength training all count.

You'll also want to eliminate endocrine-disrupting chemicals and foods from your routine. That means cutting out plastic containers, personal care products with phthalates, and anything containing seed oils.

Vitamin D deficiency and insufficiency are also common among PCOS patients. Get regular daily sunlight to optimize your vitamin D — but avoid peak sun hours (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.) until you've cut back on LA for at least six months. These changes will reduce cyst formation and help bring your hormones back into balance.

- 3. Consider using natural progesterone to restore balance** — If your cysts are tied to hormone imbalances, especially **high estrogen**, natural progesterone offers a powerful, targeted solution. Progesterone directly counteracts the effects of excess estrogen and helps normalize your cycle.

A 2020 study found that "cyclic progesterone for PCOS lowers androgens and restores estradiol-progesterone balance."¹² Used correctly, **natural progesterone** supports ovulation, reduces cyst formation, and brings your hormones back into sync, without the side effects of synthetic options.

- 4. Take the guesswork out of your insulin status** — If your cysts are connected to PCOS, there's a good chance you're insulin resistant, even if your blood sugar looks normal. Ask your practitioner for a test called **HOMA-IR**, short for Homeostatic Model Assessment of Insulin Resistance.

This test looks at both fasting insulin and glucose to show how well your body is processing sugar. If your score is above 1.0, it's time to clean up your **carb quality**, lower LA intake, and focus on blood sugar stability.

- 5. Use pain relief and movement to stay consistent while you heal** — If your cyst is causing you pain, don't wait it out in bed. Use a warm compress on your abdomen to increase blood flow. Massage the surrounding areas, especially your lower back and thighs.

Gentle yoga or walking helps keep your hormones moving in the right direction and stops muscle tension from making things worse. The goal is to stay active and consistent, not push through unbearable pain.

FAQs About Ovarian Cysts

Q: What causes ovarian cysts, and are they dangerous?

A: Ovarian cysts are fluid-filled sacs that often form during ovulation. Most are harmless and resolve on their own. However, some cysts grow large, rupture, or twist the ovary, which causes intense pain and requires emergency surgery. In rare cases, complex cysts, especially those with solid components, are a sign of ovarian cancer.

Q: Do vegetable oils really affect your ovaries?

A: Yes. Research shows that vegetable oils high in LA, such as canola and sunflower oil, act like xenoestrogens — compounds that mimic estrogen in your body. These oils trigger ovarian atrophy, hormonal disruption, and the development of cysts, even without raising conventional hormone markers. Eliminating these oils is a key first step in protecting ovarian health.

Q: What's the link between PCOS and ovarian cysts?

A: PCOS is a hormonal disorder that causes irregular periods, high androgens (like testosterone), insulin resistance, and the formation of multiple small cysts on the ovaries. PCOS is a root cause of recurring cysts and is strongly influenced by lifestyle factors like diet, movement and exposure to environmental toxins.

Q: Are there natural ways to relieve cyst-related pain and symptoms?

A: Yes. Heat therapy, massage, and gentle movement like yoga ease pelvic pressure and reduce pain. Herbal teas like chamomile and ginger help lower inflammation and balance hormones. These remedies won't shrink the cyst itself but do improve your comfort and support hormonal healing while you address the root cause.

Q: What's the best way to stop ovarian cysts from coming back?

A: Start by removing dietary sources of linoleic acid (vegetable oils), addressing insulin resistance through a blood test like HOMA-IR, and cleaning up environmental hormone disruptors. If you have PCOS, support your body with regular movement, consider natural progesterone, and focus on hormone-friendly habits like drinking herbal teas and managing stress.

Sources and References

- ^{1, 2} [TIME May 13, 2025](#)
- ³ [Gynecology October 2024, Volume 231, Issue 4, P440.E1-440.E7](#)
- ⁴ [Cleveland Clinic, Ovarian Cysts](#)
- ⁵ [Environmental Science and Pollution Research February 2022;29\(6\):9153-9163](#)
- ⁶ [To Extract Knowledge from Matter](#)
- ^{7, 9} [Medical News Today, Home remedies for ovarian cyst symptoms](#)
- ⁸ [Syst Rev. 2019 Feb 12;8:51](#)
- ¹⁰ [J Res Med Sci. 2018 Apr 26;23:33](#)
- ¹¹ [Front Nutr. 2022 Nov 29;9:1071515](#)
- ¹² [Drug Discovery Today: Disease Models, Volume 32, Part B, Winter 2020, Pages 71-82, Highlights](#)