



Fetal and Neonatal Ovarian Cysts

What are ovarian cysts?

An ovarian cyst is a fluid filled sac inside the ovary. Ovarian cysts in babies are usually benign (not cancerous). The hormones a mother makes while pregnant may stimulate her baby's ovaries to grow a cyst.

What are symptoms of ovarian cysts?

Most commonly, babies with ovarian cysts do not have any symptoms. However sometimes there may be symptoms or signs of ovarian cysts:

- Pelvic or abdominal mass
- Increasing abdominal size
- Abdominal pain at the belly button or lower
- Difficulty urinating
- Sudden onset of abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, and low grade fever, IF the ovary twists on itself (ovarian torsion)
- If a cyst is producing hormones, there may be some breast development or vaginal bleeding. This typically stops when the cyst goes away.

Are ovarian cysts dangerous?

- Ovarian cysts in newborn babies are rarely dangerous.
- Ovarian cysts usually resolve without treatment by 6 months of age.
- Sometimes when an ovarian cyst is big, the ovary can twist. This is called an ovarian torsion. Torsion can occur before a baby is born or after birth, but is a rare event. In a newborn with a large ovarian cyst, sudden pain and vomiting can be a symptom of torsion and the baby should be evaluated by a provider.

How will my child's healthcare provider diagnose ovarian cysts?

Most of the time the cysts are found when the mother has a prenatal ultrasound (also called a sonogram) during her pregnancy. Ovarian cysts are a common finding during a prenatal ultrasound; they are seen in 30-70% of fetal ovaries. Sometimes a cyst is found after birth if a healthcare provider detects an abdominal mass during a physical exam, or if an ultrasound is performed for another reason.

How are ovarian cysts treated?

Most ovarian cysts in babies do not need treatment.

When a cyst is found, your healthcare provider will monitor the cyst with periodic ultrasounds. Most of the time, the cyst goes away and there is nothing else that needs to be done.

If the cyst does not go away, your baby will continue to have ultrasounds to see if the cyst stays the same, gets smaller or gets larger. Rarely, the cyst may need to be drained or may require surgery. If surgery is required, usually only the cyst is removed, although there are very rare cases when the ovary needs to be removed.

If your healthcare provider suspects your baby's ovary has twisted on itself (ovarian torsion), surgery may be necessary. When torsion is thought to have occurred prior to birth, surgery is not recommended as it is not likely to help save the involved ovary. Your healthcare provider will help you to decide what is the best treatment for your child.

Will ovarian cysts come back?

Ovarian cysts that go away by themselves within 3-6 months rarely come back in childhood.