

Health & Fitness

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LIVE WELL

Hysterectomy may not be your only option

New procedures help many women

By **DARLA CARTER**

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The Courier-Journal

For years, doctors tried to persuade June Hardin to have her uterus removed, but she resisted, hoping for a better solution than hysterectomy.

Three, large uterine fibroids had swollen her uterus to the size of a four-month pregnancy, making her bleed so excessively that she lacked energy, lost the normal color on the palms of her hands and had to under-

go several tests to rule out a bleeding cancer.

But those symptoms have vanished, thanks to uterine fibroid embolization — an outpatient procedure to shrink the fibroids without removing the uterus or losing the ability to have children.

"I've always wanted to have children," said Hardin, 43. "If it doesn't happen, though, this is my uterus. I don't want to give it away."

The procedure, also known as uterine artery embolization, is among several options available today for women who want to avoid the emotional and physical toll of a hysterectomy.

"It was nothing but a needle prick and an overnight stay," said Hardin,

who underwent the procedure last October at Caritas Medical Center. "This is a dream come true."

During this procedure for premenopausal women, a small incision is made in the groin, then a narrow catheter is guided into the arteries that feed the uterus, said Dr. Daren Repishti, a radiologist at Caritas who does the procedure. Tiny particles, resembling sand, are then released so that they cut off the blood flow to the fibroids.

"By blocking the arteries that bring nutrients to the fibroid, we starve it, and over time the fibroid will shrink," usually by 50 percent to

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BY MICHAEL CLEVINGER, THE COURIER-JOURNAL

Dr. Daren Repishti, of Caritas Medical Center, shows what a fibroid looks like before and after uterine fibroid embolization.