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# Katherine tells how new drug helped end 'nightmare' condition

A woman with fibroids, whose life was blighted every month by heavy periods, has been treated with a breakthrough drug. She tells **Lynette Pinchess** how it has transformed her life

IT CAN be a taboo subject – but children's nurse Katherine Hill is not afraid to speak out about the embarrassing problem of nightmare periods.

Her own problems were caused by severe fibroids – non-cancerous tumours – which grow in and around the womb.

Katherine, who had suffered for years, just put it down to “one of those things” and it was not until a dentist referred her for bad mouth ulcers that the problem was discovered.

The 43-year-old is among 40 per cent of women who suffer from fibroids, which cause symptoms including painful and heavy periods, anaemia and infertility.

Many women – unaware that they have fibroids – wrongly believe they simply have just heavy periods and do not seek medical help for years, by which time the problem can be severe.

After successful treatment, Katherine, who is married with no children and lives in Cinderhill, is now telling her story on a DVD that is being sent to GP surgeries round the country to promote Esmya, a new drug, which has changed her life.

After she took the once-a-day tablet for three months, her symptoms improved and the fibroids shrank, making them easier to remove during an operation, called an endometrial ablation.

Since surgery Katherine's life has been transformed.

“It used to be horrendous,” she said. “I would literally have to rush to the toilet. Staying at someone's house was a nightmare.

“I once ended up in A&E because I'd lost so much blood.

Katherine, who works at the Queen's Medical Centre, said she can now lead a normal life again. Her periods have all but stopped.

“I've been absolutely fine since my treatment,” she said. “It's made such a

difference to my life.”

Esmya works by blocking progesterone receptors to rapidly control bleeding and reduce anaemia with fewer of the side effects of other treatments.

And most importantly, after the drug shrank Katherine's fibroids, surgery was shorter and safer and allowed complete removal.

The consultant gynaecologist who treated her says with any luck she will not need further surgery.

Martin Powell, from the Nottingham NHS Treatment Centre at the QMC, said: “The operation took 20 minutes. If you had a fibroid that size before Esmya and a lot of bleeding it was not unknown for surgeons to do an hysterectomy.”

Until January this year, the drug could only be prescribed a three-month spell to woman of reproductive age with moderate to severe symptoms requiring surgery. But following clinical trials, the European Commission gave approval in January for repeat use for a further three months.

Further clinical trials are under way to see if the drug is safe and suitable for long-term on-off treatment.

Mr Powell says said: “Esmya has made a significant impact on patients. It is a very well-tolerated drug by patients and side-effects are minor. It can also benefit PMS. Some patients on it have said ‘Mr Powell, I have never felt so well in my life’ so you could say this is a drug that has a dramatic effect on women.

“While waiting for surgery, women also have the added benefit of not having heavy bleeding, which can be very debilitating and have a serious impact on quality of life. Around 70 to 80 per cent of patients taking Esmya get no periods.”



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**Successful treatment:**  
The Circle NHS Treatment Centre, next to the QMC.



**Wonder drug:**  
Katherine Hill suffers from fibroids, which cause painful and heavy periods. But a new drug called Esmya (inset) has changed her life.  
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