



SELF

STUDY OF
ENVIRONMENT,
LIFESTYLE & FIBROIDS

1-877-692-SELF (7353)

www.DetroitSELF.org

Fall 2022

Dear SELF Participant,

I hope you and your family are safe and healthy, and enjoying the cooler weather and beautiful golden colors of fall! As always: thank you for supporting SELF: The Study of Environment, Lifestyle & Fibroids.

In this issue of the newsletter, we highlight new findings from SELF on Vitamin D and fibroid development. We also list a few good reads to cozy up with for the season. As always, we include important study updates and reminders.

Thank you for being part of SELF.

Sincerely,

Dr. Donna Baird
SELF Principal Investigator

COVID-19 QUESTIONNAIRE

Sherice Simpson and the rest of our study team want to learn more about how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted your health and well-being. Understanding your experiences will be important as we continue to follow the health of SELF participants. To thank you for your input we will send you a \$30 electronic gift card by email after you complete the survey.

Thank you to the over 800 of you who have already completed the SELF COVID-19 Questionnaire. Sherice is back in medical school now but will be with the SELF study this winter. If you would like to learn more about the survey, or if you have not received an email invitation, please reach out to our study team by phone (1-877-692-7353) or by email (info@DetroitSELF.org). We will also be sending out a paper copy later in the fall for those who want that format. Just contact us and let us know!



ANY QUESTIONS?

Call 1-877-692-SELF (7353)
or email questions@DetroitSELF.org

NEW SELF FINDINGS

The SELF team has been busy analyzing the data we have collected to begin to learn more about fibroid development.

Fibroid incidence increases with age...

...at least through the 30s. This work was led by Ganesa Wegienka at Henry Ford. We don't yet have enough data on women in their 40s to see if the trend continues. We'll need another follow-up.

This increase with age is consistent with prior studies, but now we have more details. We get an early picture of fibroid development with SELF. The SELF data support the previous suggestion that fibroid development starts about 10 years earlier on average for Black women compared to White women. We now estimate that by age 30, 30% of Black women will already have fibroids.

The small fibroids initially seen on our study ultrasounds would be unlikely to be diagnosed clinically because a doctor's diagnosis is usually made in response to women seeking care for the symptoms of fibroids, such as heavy menstrual bleeding and pelvic pain. Though small fibroids may sometimes cause symptoms, it is usually the larger fibroids that really disrupt life. If small fibroids could be treated before they grow large, the life-time health burden would be much smaller.

Wegienka, et al., Ultrasound Confirmed Age-Specific Uterine Fibroid Incidence in a Cohort of Black Individuals, submitted.

Vitamin D may help limit fibroid development.

The SELF team has studied vitamin D as a possible way to reduce fibroid growth. This work was led by Quaker Harmon at NIEHS, and her paper has just been accepted for publication.

Vitamin D can be measured in blood samples with the biomarker 25-hydroxy vitamin D, 25(OH)D, and we used blood samples that had been collected at baseline and the first three follow-up visits to assess vitamin D status. However, there is no standard cut-off for what is considered sufficient vitamin D and the cutoffs are based primarily on how much D we need for bone health, not for reproductive factors like fertility and fibroids. The Institute of Medicine has a cutoff of 20ng/ml and the Endocrine Society has a cut-off of 30 ng/ml.

We found that many SELF participants had insufficient D by both cut-off measures, and less than 10% of the SELF samples had D of 30 ng/ml or higher. Still, we found some evidence that even if D was at least 20 ng/ml, there was about a 10% reduction in fibroid growth.

The findings for reduced incidence were less convincing, but suggestive of benefit. We think it is important to test the hypothesis of protective effects of vitamin D for fibroid development in a study that enrolls women and gives them vitamin D supplements to take. If there were regular testing for 25(OH) D, doses could be increased to keep the concentration above the 30 ng/ml cutoff. We hope to conduct such a study in the future to better test this potentially promising hypothesis.

Harmon-QE, et al., Vitamin D and uterine fibroid growth, incidence, and loss: a prospective ultrasound study, Fertility and Sterility, in press.



THE JOY OF READING

There is nothing like a good book, your favorite blanket, and a pumpkin spice drink while relaxing. Here are a list of a few classic good reads by female African American authors to get started or revisit. Grab your book, Kindle, IPAD or Audible and enjoy!!

***Coldest Winter Ever* by Sister Souljah**

The *Coldest Winter Ever* serves as a coming of age novel for many Generation Y women. The novel tells the story of a teenage woman finding herself in Brooklyn, New York as she encounters drugs, money, dysfunctional relationships and love. Also catch up on the sequel!

***Kindred* by Octavia Butler**

The novel tells one of the many sides of slavery through the character Edana Franklin.

***The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison**

This first novel written by Toni Morrison examines racism, incest, and skin tone complexities many black women face. The controversial book is one of the many novels written by Morrison that we recommend.

***All About Love: New Visions* by Bell Hooks**

Bell Hooks provides major insight on her ideas of love in this novel. It is both a refreshing and challenging book to read. It will question your every thought and idea of love and is perfect for a young woman trying to understand just what love is.

STUDY UPDATES

- » 1342 participants have completed all Follow-up 4 activities.
- » The Study of Ovarian Aging and Reserve (SOAR) started data collection in October 2019. To date, 350 participants have completed SOAR clinic visits. If you are interested in learning more about SOAR, or to determine if you are eligible, give us a call at **1-877-692-SELF (7353)** or send us an email at **info@DetroitSELF.org** and a member of the Henry Ford team will contact you.

REMINDERS

- » We will continue to share SELF findings and regular study update mailings (three times per year). Please call us at **1-877-692-SELF (7353)** or send an email to **info@DetroitSELF.org** if your contact information changes, so that you will not miss these important updates.
- » Let us know if any contact information changes for **your secondary contacts**.
- » If you live out-of-state and will be in the Detroit area, please reach out to us as soon as you have your dates, so that we can schedule you for a SELF visit. **To thank you for your continued participation and time completing this visit, you will receive a \$150 gift card.**



SELF

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Are masks still required for visits?



Yes, masks are still mandatory for clinic visits. If you forget your mask, a member of the Henry Ford study staff will provide one for you when you enter the building.

LET'S STAY IN TOUCH!

Please call us at 1 877 692 SELF (7353) if your phone numbers, mailing address or email address changes.



National Institute of
Environmental Health Sciences



**HENRY
FORD
HEALTH**

What SELF Participants are saying...

- » I'M VERY HAPPY TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY. All staff were great!
- » I LOVE Rita. She makes it all ok.

Thanks for the kudos!

Newsletter Suggestions

We want to hear from you! What would you like to see in future SELF newsletters?
Submit your ideas and suggestions to info@DetroitSELF.org.