

Benign Breast Lesions and Breast Tenderness

(Fibrocystic Breast Condition)

Brown Health Services Patient Education Series

Types of Breast Lesions:

Simple Fibroadenomas:

They are benign solid tumors containing glandular as well as fibrous tissue with a hormonal relationship, they can increase in size during pregnancy or with estrogen therapy. They are most commonly found in women between the ages of 15 and 35 years.

Simple Breast Cysts:

Simple cysts are very common. They are fluid-filled, round, or ovoid masses derived from the terminal duct lobular unit. Breast cysts can present as breast masses or mammographic abnormalities. Cysts are common in women between 35 and 50 years old. Acute enlargement of cysts may cause severe, localized pain of sudden onset.

Lipomas:

Breast lipomas are benign, usually solitary tumors composed of mature fat cells. These present as soft, nontender, well-circumscribed masses.

Nodular Sensitive Breasts:

They are a common and benign problem. The degree of breast pain experienced varies with each menstrual period, or at different times in the life cycle. Nodular sensitive breasts can occur at any age after menstruation starts, although the frequency peaks between age 30-50.

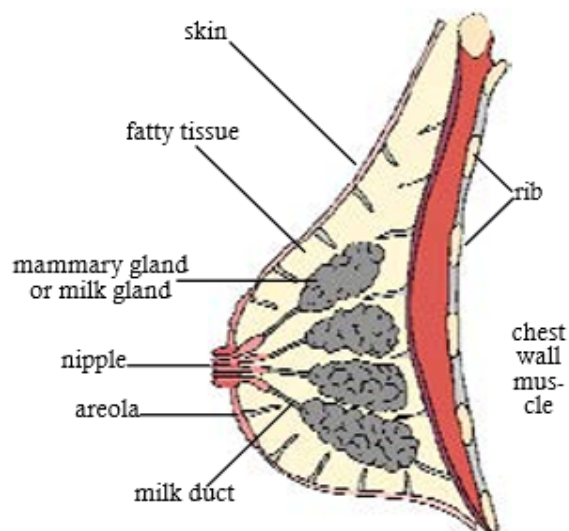
Other Breast Conditions:

Please contact your PCP for assessment of any lesions not specifically mentioned in this document.

Note all breast lesions including breast pain are classified as cyclical (ie, related to the menstrual cycle), non cyclical, or extramammary.

How to check for breast lesions:

Breast self-exam is an important way to follow the changes in your breasts, this may be done monthly after menses and during a warm shower. If you know what your "baseline lumpiness" feels like, you will be more able to determine if one cyst displays a persistent increase in size and seems to "stand out" from the background tissues, or if a cyst has become attached to underlying tissue and is no longer moveable. In such cases, you must see your medical provider for further evaluation. A breast check by



your medical provider is also an important part of your annual health exam.

How is breast pain treated?

Breast tenderness can be quite uncomfortable. Some simple pain relief measures include:

- Take a pain reliever as needed – acetaminophen (Tylenol), aspirin, or ibuprofen.
- The use of topical diclofenac may be helpful
- Oral contraceptives relieve the symptoms of cystic sensitive breasts in many women. Decreasing the estrogen potency in oral contraceptive regimens can be effective.
- Therapeutic doses of vitamin E therapy under the supervision of a medical provider.
- Evening primrose oil is an alternative health food supplement
- Sports bra during exercise may be helpful
- Apply heating pads or hot towels to breasts as needed; warm baths or showers may also provide relief
- Ice packs or gentle massage may be helpful
- Wear a well fitted, supportive bra, perhaps even to bed as well as during the day. Please note that you should evaluate the fitting of a bra prior to a complaint of breast pain.

Dietary considerations

Diet may have an effect on sensitive breasts. Paradoxically, increasing your consumption of non-caffeinated, non-alcoholic fluids can decrease retention of fluid in body tissues. The more you drink, the less your body thinks it has to retain. Drinking 6 to 8 glasses of water a day is a good idea for many health reasons. Limiting salt consumption may be helpful because sodium encourages fluid retention and may increase breast engorgement. The evidence is inconclusive.

The only dietary substance that seems, at this time, to correlate with nodular sensitive breasts is dietary fat, particularly saturated fat. Studies indicate that an increased fat intake is related to increased incidence of sensitive breast conditions. The evidence is moderate.

Generally a low-fat, nutrient-dense diet is recommended, this includes fresh fruits and vegetables, cooked dried beans and peas and whole grain breads and cereals, with a moderate intake of nonfat milk and milk products, fish and poultry. Avoid or limit saturated fat intake. Eliminate or limit alcohol consumption as well. Smoking cessation also is recommended.

Reference: www.Uptodate.com

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