

Breast problems can include breast pain or masses or lumps within the breast.

#### **What to look for**

- tenderness, pain or swelling in one or both breasts, most likely caused by premenstrual swelling.
- pain accompanied by redness and warmth or a discharge from the nipple; this may indicate an infection or a benign growth or breast cancer.
- a lump that is movable may be a cyst or a fibroadenoma.
- a lump that is hard, is not movable, or feels attached to the chest wall, with or without pain, perhaps with dimpling or puckering of the breast; this may be a sign of breast cancer.

Breast can change for a number of different reasons such as puberty, age, monthly with onset of the periods. Most changes in your breast are perfectly normal and no cause for concern. However, you may experience any of several conditions that require medical attention. Especially breast pain or lumps.

Starting at puberty, you should examine your breasts every month, so that you become familiar with their structure - you know what they look like and feel like so you can detect any changes that occur and have them checked out by a doctor.

Premenstrual changes can cause temporary thickening that disappears after the period, so it is best to check your breasts about a week after your period. If you are no longer menstruating, examine your breasts monthly on a day you will remember. Look for dimpling or puckering, and using light pressure, check for lumps near the surface and firm pressure to explore deeper tissues. Check each nipple to see if there is any discharge. **If there is discharge - consult your doctor.**

Mammograms (specialised breast x-ray) can reveal tumours too tiny to be felt by hand. These tests should be done every 2 year from the age of 35 then increasing the frequency to once a year at age 50. If you have a family history of breast cancer, especially in your mother or sister, your physician may advise a different schedule.

#### **Breast Pain And Lumps**

Breast pain can have many causes, including the normal swelling of breast tissue during the menstrual cycle. Other causes include infection or injury; growths, including cancer; and perhaps diet.

The general swelling of breast tissue with the menstrual period can be painful, but it is not dangerous, and no treatment is necessary if you can tolerate the discomfort.

Breast lumps include cysts, adenomas, and papillomas. They are all different sizes and shapes and can be in different places within the breast. It is quite common for women to have lumps in their breasts, (or fibroadenosis), which is sometimes associated with hormonal changes related to the menstrual cycle. Most lumps are benign and do not signal cancer; however, any time you find a new or unusual lump, have your doctor check it to make sure it is not cancerous or pre-cancerous.

Cysts, which can be large or small, are benign fluid-filled sacs. They may be very painful. The best tool for distinguishing a cyst from a solid tumour is ultrasound; a needle biopsy may also be done.

Infection in the breast produce the same symptoms you would see elsewhere in your body, except that in your breast, infections tend to become walled off from surrounding tissue, producing small abscesses. This may give them the appearance of cysts. Infections occur almost exclusively in breast-feeding mothers. If you suspect you have an infection, **see your doctor.**

Cysts may produce pain, but breast cancer rarely does - although pain does not rule out the possibility of cancer.

#### **Traditional Treatment**

Practitioners of both conventional and alternative medicine use diet and nutrition to prevent and treat monthly swelling of the breasts. It is a good idea to maintain a healthy weight and eat a balanced diet. Avoid salt at this time as it can contribute to fluid retention. For some women, eliminating caffeine and related substances, can alleviate breast pain.

In recent years, some conventional doctors have suggested vitamin E supplements, to treat breast pain not caused by cancer. In addition, a conventional physician may suggest relieving pain with an analgesic or general pain reliever.

If the pain still persists your doctor may prescribe other drugs to help.

If you suffer from breast lumps, a doctor may insert a needle into the cyst and draw the fluid out and examine it. This also rids you of the cyst. If however the fluid is bloody the doctor will want to investigate this further. It may be an indication of cancer.

Fibroadenomas can be diagnosed only by biopsy. Surgical removal, usually in a same-day surgical procedure, is considered the only treatment.

Some conventional doctors recommend eliminating caffeine and saturated fats to shrink breast cysts.

Breast infections are treated with antibiotics. If an abscess exists, your doctor may also make a small incision to drain it. If this doesn't work, minor surgery is the next step.

### **Alternative/natural Treatments**

In addition to conventional dietary changes and supplements, naturopaths will treat breast pain with higher doses of nutritional supplements and with herbs.

**Herbal Therapies** - Evening primrose oil and Vitamin E may be helpful for this problem.

**Personal Care** - It is often helpful to warm the area with a warm washer or compress.

### **Dietary Considerations**

- Because fat in the diet is associated with oestrogen production, you can reduce oestrogen levels in your body by eating a low-fat diet.
- Eat a low fat, high fibre diet and avoid stress for long periods.
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### **When to seek further professional advice**

- you notice any kind of new or unusual lump in your breasts, especially one that remains throughout your menstrual cycle.. **Have your doctor check any lump.**