



Breast Pain

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Breast pain is one of the most common breast problems. It is not a disease and in general not a sign of cancer. Up to 70% of women feel this at sometime in their life. Women may feel varying amounts of breast pain. It may range from mild to severe. They may feel it in one or both breasts and the pain may be felt into their armpit as well.

What types of Breast pain are there?

There are three types of breast pain:

1. Cyclical Breast Pain:

- ▶ is related to the woman's period (menstrual cycle).
- ▶ makes up 75% of all breast pain reported.
- ▶ can be felt with or without lumpiness of the breast.
- ▶ seems to be related to changes in a woman's hormones. Women usually feel more pain before a period and less after the period.
- ▶ can be affected by stress. Stress affects women's hormone levels so stress may also affect breast pain.

2. Non-Cyclical Breast Pain:

- ▶ is not related to the menstrual cycle.
- ▶ is less common.
- ▶ is felt in one exact area in the breast or in both breasts. Women having non-cyclical breast pain can point to exactly where it hurts.
- ▶ has no known cause.
- ▶ may last for years and then disappear.

3. Non-Breast Origin Pain:

- ▶ is not related to the menstrual cycle.
- ▶ feels like it comes from the breast. The pain actually starts in the middle of the chest. It is caused by increased stress on the joints where the ribs and breast connect. Poor posture and getting older add stress to these joints.
- ▶ may be caused by arthritis (costochondritis).

How do I find out which type of pain I have?

See your doctor. You will be asked about your medical history, be examined and if needed have an ultrasound or a breast x-ray (mammogram).

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How is Breast Pain Treated?

- ▶ Get reassurance that the pain you are feeling is not because of a disease or cancer.
- ▶ Wear a bra that supports your breasts well.
- ▶ Change what you are eating. It might help. Some women find that making these changes helps.
 - Decreasing the amount or stopping caffeine (which is in coffee, tea, cola drinks and chocolate) .
 - Eating a low fat diet by eating less fatty foods and eating more grains, fruit, and vegetables.
 - Reducing salt intake.
 - Taking vitamin supplements such as:
 - vitamin B6, 100 mg daily
 - vitamin E, 400 IU daily
 - Evening Primrose Oil, up to 1,000 mg 3 times a day
- ▶ Have fluid-filled cysts drained if they are painful. This is called cyst aspiration. These cysts sometimes refill.
- ▶ Take medication your doctor prescribes.

Your doctor may prescribe aspirin and/or anti-inflammatory agents to relieve costochondritis.

An exercising and stretching program may also be recommended.
- ▶ Surgical removal is usually not required.