

Breast Pain

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Breast pain is any pain, discomfort, tenderness or tightness in your breast. It can happen in one or both breasts or in your underarm.

It is normal to have some tenderness in your breasts. In most cases, breast cancer does not cause pain.

Causes

Puberty/adolescence

Breasts begin to grow during puberty. They may not grow at the same time and they may hurt or feel tender as they grow.

Menstruation/ovulation

Before and during your period extra fluid in your breast tissue may cause your breasts to swell, feel tender, lumpy or all. These feelings usually stop when your period ends.

Birth control

Different types of birth control methods contain estrogen and progesterone or progesterone only. Pills, mini pills, patches, injections and vaginal rings may cause sore breasts.

Pregnancy

Your breasts become fuller and tender to the touch. Milk ducts are getting larger and blood supply to the breasts is increasing. As a result, your breasts may feel lumpier than they did before pregnancy.

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding can lead to two types of breast pain:

- A plugged duct is one that does not drain properly. This results in pressure building around the plug. The area becomes tender, and there may be a painful lump. That area of the breast may look red. If the blockage is in the nipple, the clogged pore may look like a small white pimple.
- Mastitis is an infection of the breast. The infection is in the tissue and not in your milk. You can and should continue breastfeeding. Bacteria entering your breast through a crack in the nipple or skin can cause mastitis.

Talk with your health care provider about any breast changes you see and feel during pregnancy.

Menopause

During menopause your body stops making estrogen and progesterone. If you take hormone replacement therapy (HRT), menopause symptoms may be relieved but you may have breast tenderness or enlargement.

Long-term use of HRT could increase your risk for breast cancer. Talk with your health care provider about if you should continue taking HRT. Do not stop taking HRT without first talking with your health care provider.

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Weight changes

The fatty tissue in your breasts changes as you gain or lose weight. This may cause a change in how your breasts feel, how they look or both. If your weight change is significant, it may cause your breasts to be tender.

Treatment

Breast pain does not always need treatment. It can sometimes get better on its own.

To help ease breast pain, you can try:

- using heat (warm pack) or cold (ice pack) on your breast
- taking acetaminophen (such as Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (such as Advil®). Follow package directions unless your health care provider gives you other instructions.
- wearing a bra that fits well and offers more support
- decreasing or avoiding caffeine
- stopping smoking.

If your breast pain gets worse or does not go away, your health care provider may recommend:

- using evening primrose oil, vitamin E, or both. Ask your health care provider how to use these remedies.
- taking birth control pills.

When to Call Your Health Care Provider

Call your health care provider if you have:

- new pain or pain you cannot control
- nipple discharge
- a lump in your breast
- a temperature of 101 F or higher
- signs of an infection:
 - swelling
 - redness
 - odor
 - warmth
 - green or yellow discharge
- any questions or concerns.