

BREAST PAIN

Breast pain is one of the most common breast health concerns and experienced by 70-80% of women at some point in their life. Some women experience breast pain a few days before their menstrual period while others may experience pain chronically and without reason. Breast pain may affect one or both breasts and even in the armpits. Pain can range from being mild to extremely painful.

Below are some frequently asked questions regarding breast pain.

WHAT CAUSES BREAST PAIN?

Although we do not know the exact cause of breast pain, we know that women's breast tissue is sensitive to hormones and women may experience breast pain in the following situations:

- » Taking birth control pills
- » Beginning hormone replacement therapy
- » Experiencing trauma to the breast
- » During and preceding menstrual periods
- » Having a change in the breast tissue such as formation of a cyst, scar tissue, or benign lump
- » Musculoskeletal pain or referred pain due to nerve irritation

DOES BREAST PAIN MEAN I HAVE BREAST CANCER?

No, breast pain is very rarely a sign of breast cancer when not associated with a palpable mass or other suspicious clinical finding. When breast pain is the only symptom, studies have shown the incidence of cancer ranges from approximately 0-2%.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I HAVE BREAST PAIN?

If you have breast pain, we encourage you to consult with your provider, especially if the pain is associated with a lump or skin changes. Your provider may perform a clinical breast examination and review your medications in determining next steps. You are encouraged to perform regular self breast exams and if you are 40 years or older, obtain routine screening mammograms.

SOME CONSERVATIVE MEASURES THAT MAY AID IN EASING BREAST PAIN:

- » Over the counter pain medications such as Tylenol and Advil.
- » Wear a well-fitted, supportive bra and sports bra during exercise.
- » Caffeine has been implicated as a possible cause of breast pain and some women may trial caffeine reduction.
- » Decrease dietary fat intake.
- » If breast pain is determined to be due to a cyst, drainage of the cyst may be helpful.

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