

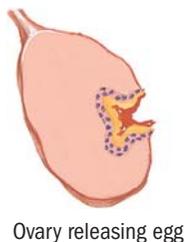
MANAGING YOUR BREAST PAIN

Breast pain (mastodynia) can be cyclic or noncyclic, depending on whether it occurs with each period (cyclic) or not. Cyclic pain usually occurs in young women who haven't gone through menopause. Noncyclic pain occurs more in women older than 40.

Some causes of breast pain are



Noncyclic pain often affects one breast. Usually a sharp, burning or stabbing pain is felt in the middle of the breast.



Cyclic pain seems related to female hormones and periods. Pain starts when the ovary releases the egg, continues until the period begins, and stops at the end of the period. A dull ache is felt in the whole breast but more near the armpit.

Your doctor makes a diagnosis from a medical history and breast examination.



What Is Breast Pain?

Mastodynia is the medical term for breast pain. Pain can be cyclic or noncyclic, depending on whether it occurs with each period (cyclic) or not. Cyclic pain usually occurs in young women who haven't gone through menopause (change of life). Noncyclic pain occurs more in women older than 40.

What Causes Breast Pain?

The many causes include fibrocystic breast disease; use of estrogen hormones; infection of the breast (mastitis); pregnancy; puberty; normal hormonal changes before puberty or menopause; breastfeeding; and drugs, including digoxin, cimetidine, spironolactone, and methyl dopa.

It's not contagious or passed from one generation to another.

What Are the Symptoms of Breast Pain?

Cyclic pain appears to be related to female hormones (estrogen, progesterone, and prolactin). A dull ache is felt in the whole breast but more on the upper outer area next to the armpit. Pain starts when the ovary releases the egg, continues until the period begins, and stops at the end of the period. Pain usually affects both breasts but sometimes one breast will be more painful than the other.

Noncyclic pain usually affects only one breast and isn't related to periods. Usually a sharp, burning, or stabbing pain is felt in the middle, around the nipple area.

Breast pain rarely means breast cancer.

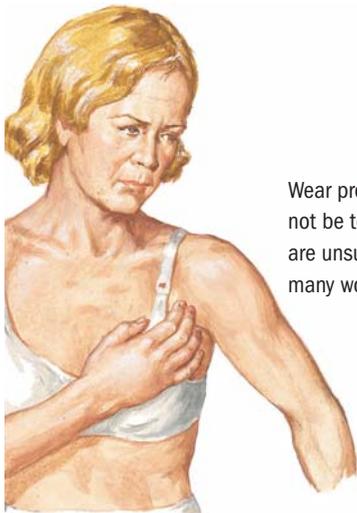
How Is Breast Pain Diagnosed?

The doctor makes a diagnosis from a medical history and breast examination.

Also, the doctor may order mammography (a special x-ray examination of the breast). If the mammogram shows a lump, the doctor may order ultrasound (a test using sound waves to see whether the lump is solid or fluid-filled).

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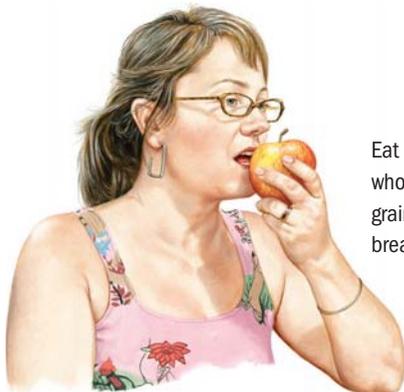
Breast pain rarely means breast cancer. For most women with breast pain unrelated to breast cancer, pain stops on its own. Symptoms that interfere with normal daily activities can be helped with pain medicines.



Wear proper fitting bras—they should not be too tight or too loose. If you are unsure, have a bra fitting done; many women wear the wrong size bra.



Don't use too much caffeine.



Eat low-fat, low-salt foods, and whole grains instead of processed grains. Avoid foods that trigger breast pain.



Although breast pain rarely means breast cancer, you should always do monthly self breast exams to check for lumps. Encourage the other women in your life to do the same.

How Is Breast Pain Treated?

Treatment is conservative, including dietary limits (e.g., low-fat, low-cholesterol foods and less caffeine).

For most women with breast pain unrelated to breast cancer, pain stops on its own. Symptoms that interfere with normal daily activities can be helped with pain medicines such as antiinflammatory drugs (e.g., ibuprofen, naproxen).

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Breast Pain:

- ✓ **DO** remember that breast cancer very rarely (<10%) causes breast pain.
- ✓ **DO** eat low-fat foods, free of hydrogenated fats such as those in margarine. Eat whole grains instead of processed grains.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you feel a lump in your breast.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you see a discharge from your nipple.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you see irregular dimpling of the breast or nipple.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you have fever, fatigue, or nausea.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you have long-lasting breast pain.
- ⊘ **DON'T** wear tight or loose-fitting bras.
- ⊘ **DON'T** use too much caffeine. Avoid foods that trigger breast pain. Avoid margarine, trans fats, and salt.

FROM THE DESK OF

NOTES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following source:

- American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
- Tel: (202) 638-5577
- Website: <http://www.acog.org>